



THE STRANGE
MISSION OF
IVAN PUTSKI

ANDRE
THE GIANT'S
NIGHT OF TERROR

SHOCKING UPSET:
GAGNE LOSES
A W A TITLE

47951 MAR 1976 75¢

WRESTLER

Wrestler

BRUNO SAMMARTINO VS. MIL MASCARAS

The Match
The Fans Demand

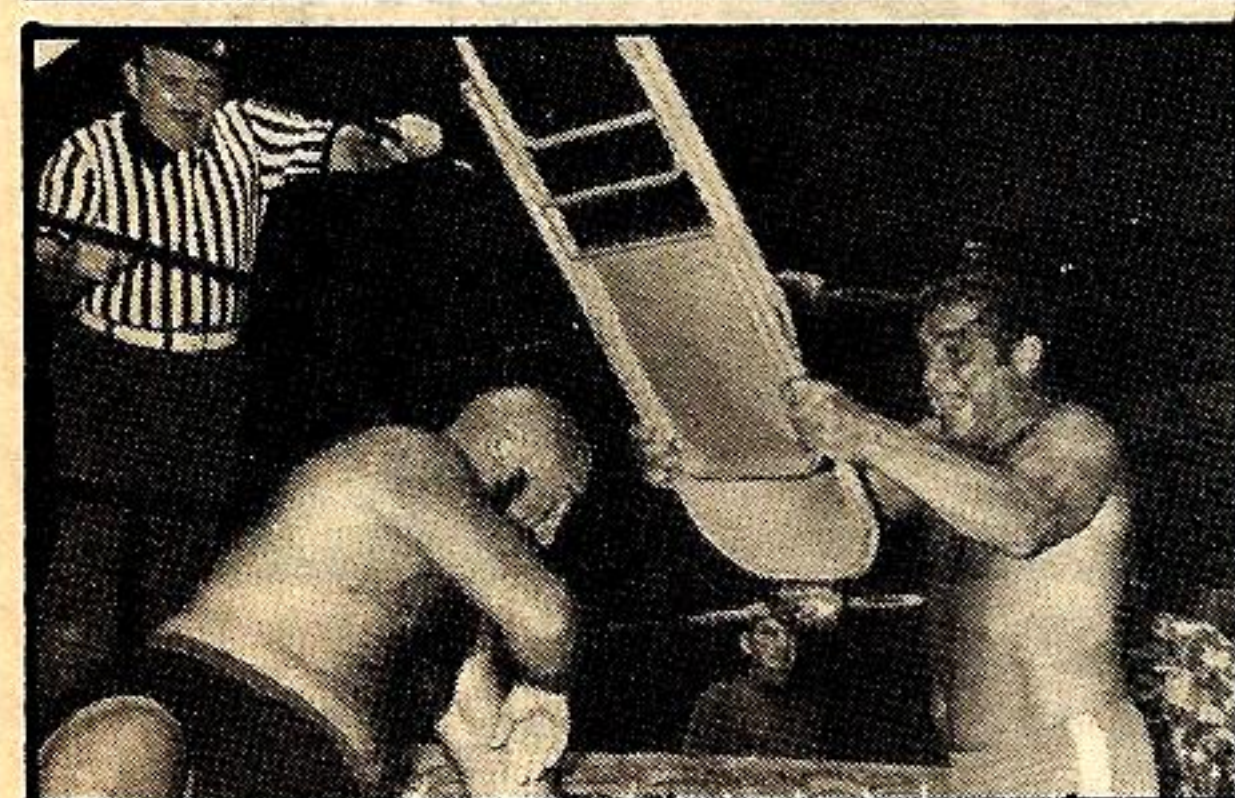
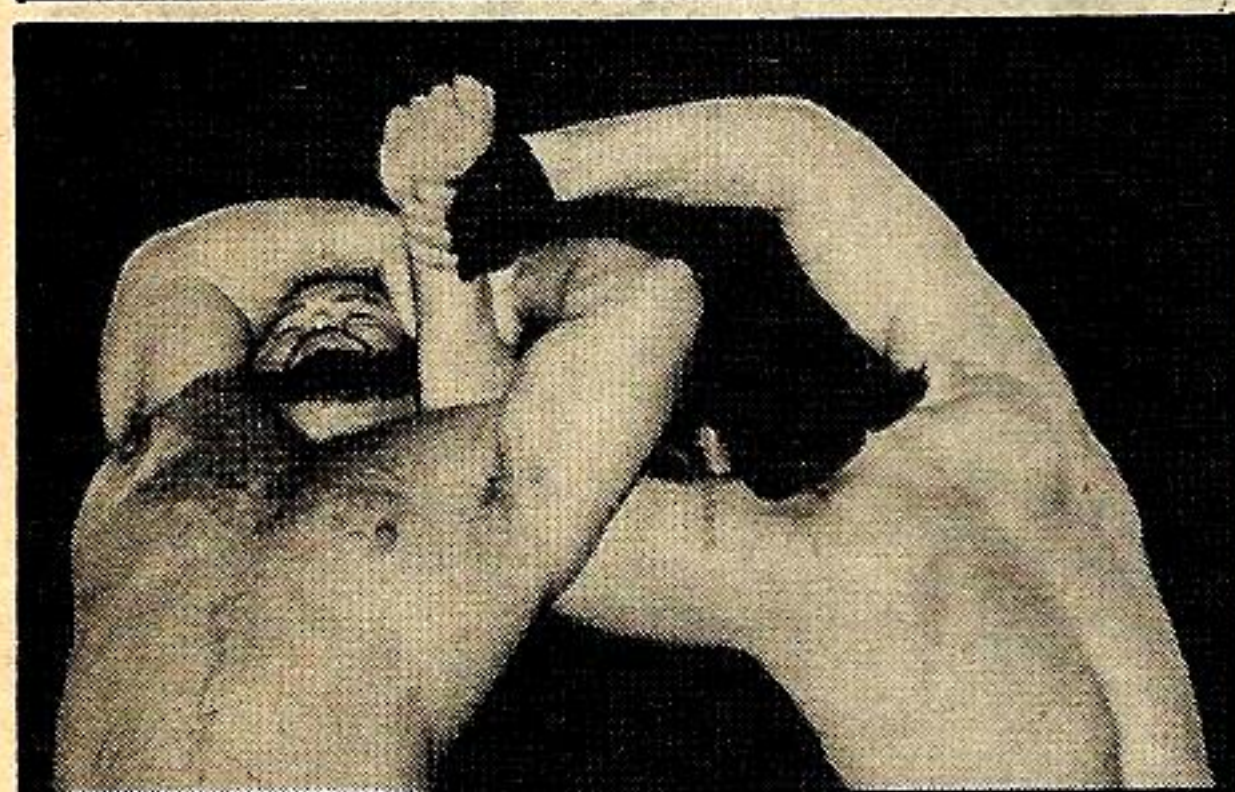
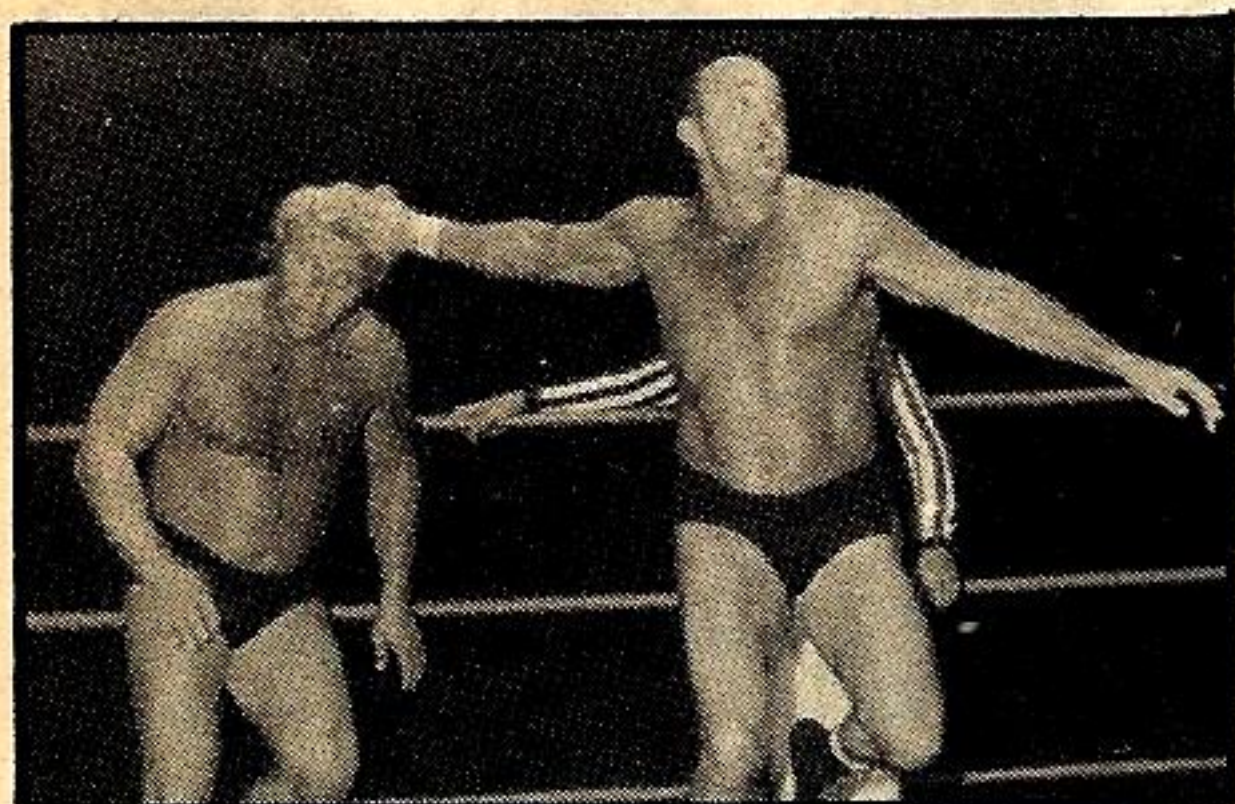
WHO
WILL
WIN?

MEASUREMENTS

Bruno Sammartino		Mil Mascaras
5' 10½"	HEIGHT	5' 9"
248	WEIGHT	233
48"	CHEST	46"
53"	(normal)	46"
53"	(expanded)	51"
22½"	NECK	19¼"
16"	FOREARM	15"
22"	BICEPS	22"
10"	WRIST	9"
34"	WAIST	32"
28"	THIGH	26"
18"	CALF	16"



Wrestler^{THE}



COVER PHOTOS BY BILL APTER

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OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS

WORLD WIDE WRESTLING FEDERATION

CHAMPION: BRUNO SAMMARTINO

- 1—BILLY GRAHAM
- 2—IVAN KOLOFF
- 3—ERNIE LADD
- 4—IVAN PUTSKI
- 5—SPIROS ARION
- 6—BUGSY MCGRAW
- 7—HAYSTACKS CALHOUN
- 8—DOMINIC DENUCCI
- 9—FRANCISCO FLORES
- 10—KEVIN SULLIVAN

AMERICAN WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

CHAMPION: NICK BOCKWINKLE

- 1—VERNE GAGNE
- 2—BILLY ROBINSON
- 3—BARON VON RASCHKE
- 4—BRUISER
- 5—OX BAKER
- 6—CRUSHER
- 7—PAMPERO FIRPO
- 8—JACQUES GOULET
- 9—BULL BULLINSKI
- 10—SOLDIER LEBOUF

MOST POPULAR

- 1—MIL MASCARAS
- 2—IVAN PUTSKI
- 3—DUSTY RHODES
- 4—BRUNO SAMMARTINO
- 5—MR. WRESTLING II
- 6—MIGHTY IGOR
- 7—CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW
- 8—ANDRE THE GIANT
- 9—JACK BRISCO
- 10—BOBO BRAZIL



TERRY FUNK



BRUNO SAMMARTINO

NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE

CHAMPION: TERRY FUNK

- 1—JACK BRISCO
- 2—HARLEY RACE
- 3—SHOEHI BABA
- 4—PAUL JONES
- 5—DORY FUNK JR.
- 6—CYCLONE NEGRO
- 7—THE SHEIK
- 8—JERRY LAWLER
- 9—MR. WRESTLING II
- 10—PAT PATTERSON

TAG TEAMS

- 1—TONY PARISI & LOUIS CERDAN
- 2—BRUISER & CRUSHER
- 3—THE VALIANT BROTHERS
- 4—THE MONGOLS
- 5—ROGER KIRBY & RIP HAWK
- 6—THE ANDERSON BROTHERS
- 7—THE INFERNO
- 8—CYCLONE & OMAR NEGRO
- 9—RAY STEVENS & NICK BOCKWINKLE
- 10—PAT PATTERSON & PEDRO MORALES

WOMEN

CHAMPION: FABULOUS MOOLAH

- 1—VICKI WILLIAMS
- 2—JOYCE GRABLE
- 3—SUE GREEN
- 4—DONNA CHRISTENELLO
- 5—SUSAN SEXTON
- 6—LEILANA KAI
- 7—BELLE STARR
- 8—SHEILA SHEPPARD
- 9—KITTY ADAMS
- 10—DOTTY DOWNS



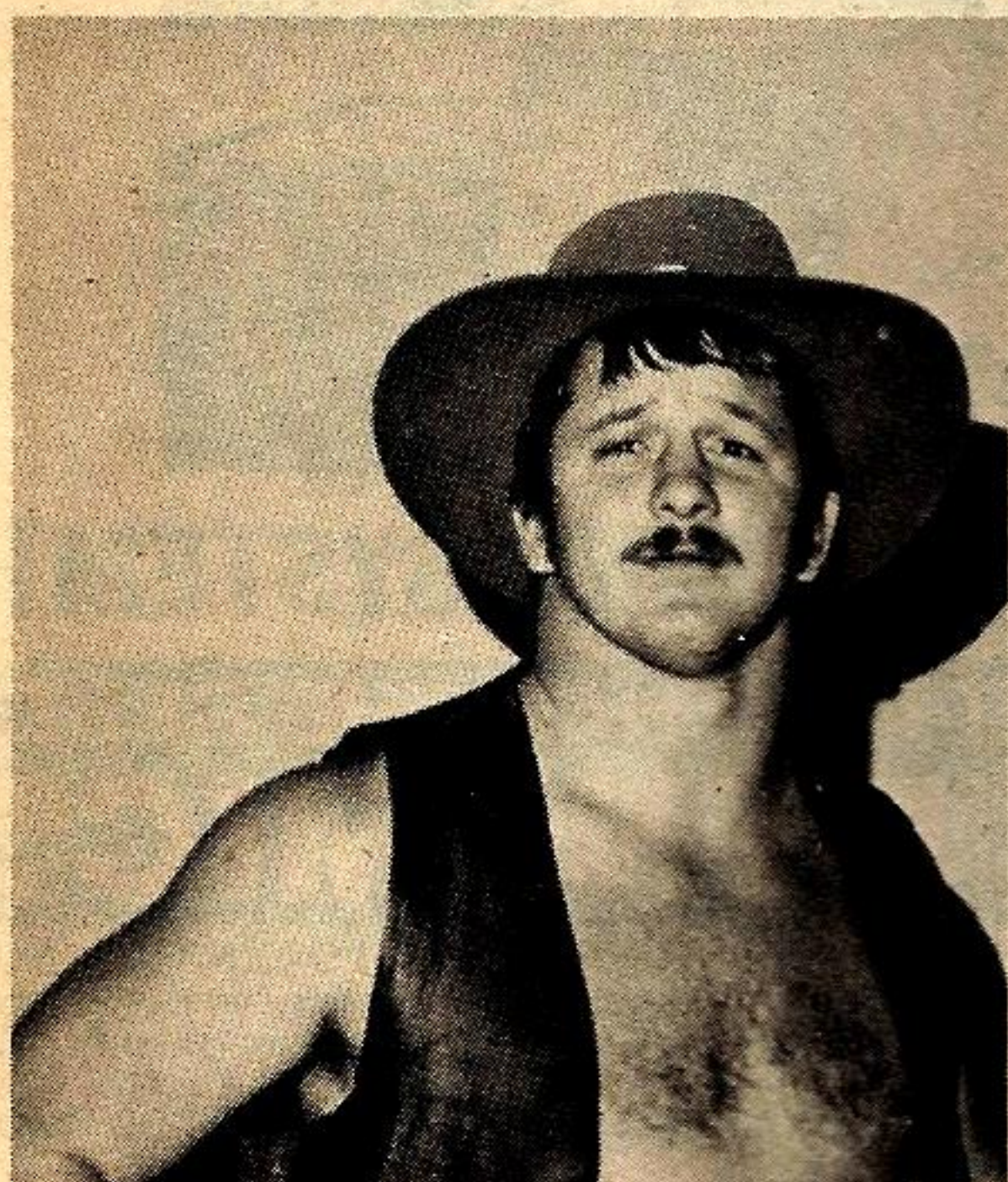
NICK BOCKWINKLE



FABULOUS MOOLAH

HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING, BABY!

By Bill Apter

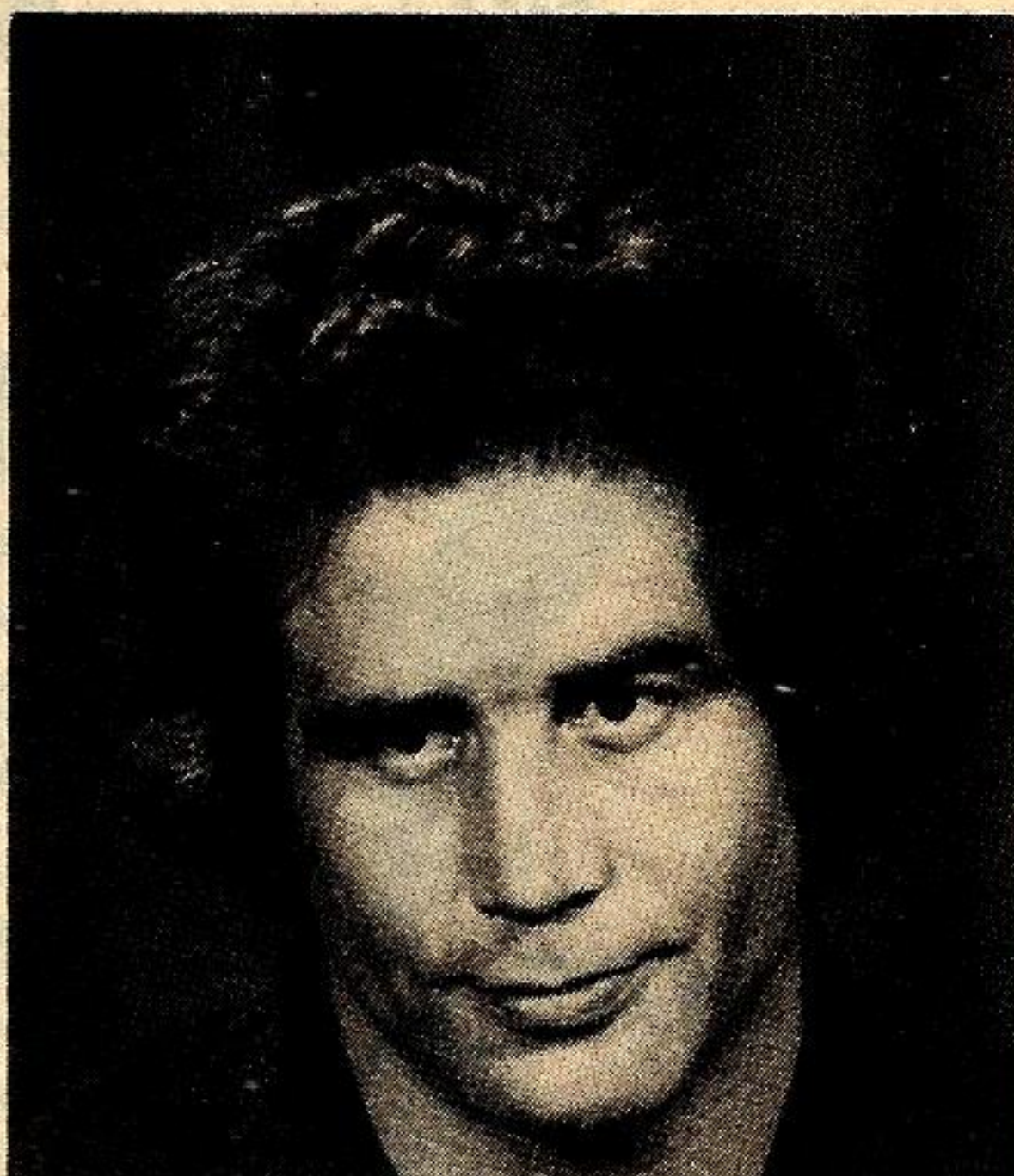


TERRY FUNK IS the new National Wrestling Alliance heavy-weight champion by virtue of a sensational win over Jack Brisco. On December 10th, 1975, Terry knocked Brisco off the NWA throne at the Miami Beach, Florida, Auditorium. We will have full details with exclusive photos in next month's issues of *INSIDE WRESTLING* and *THE WRESTLER*.

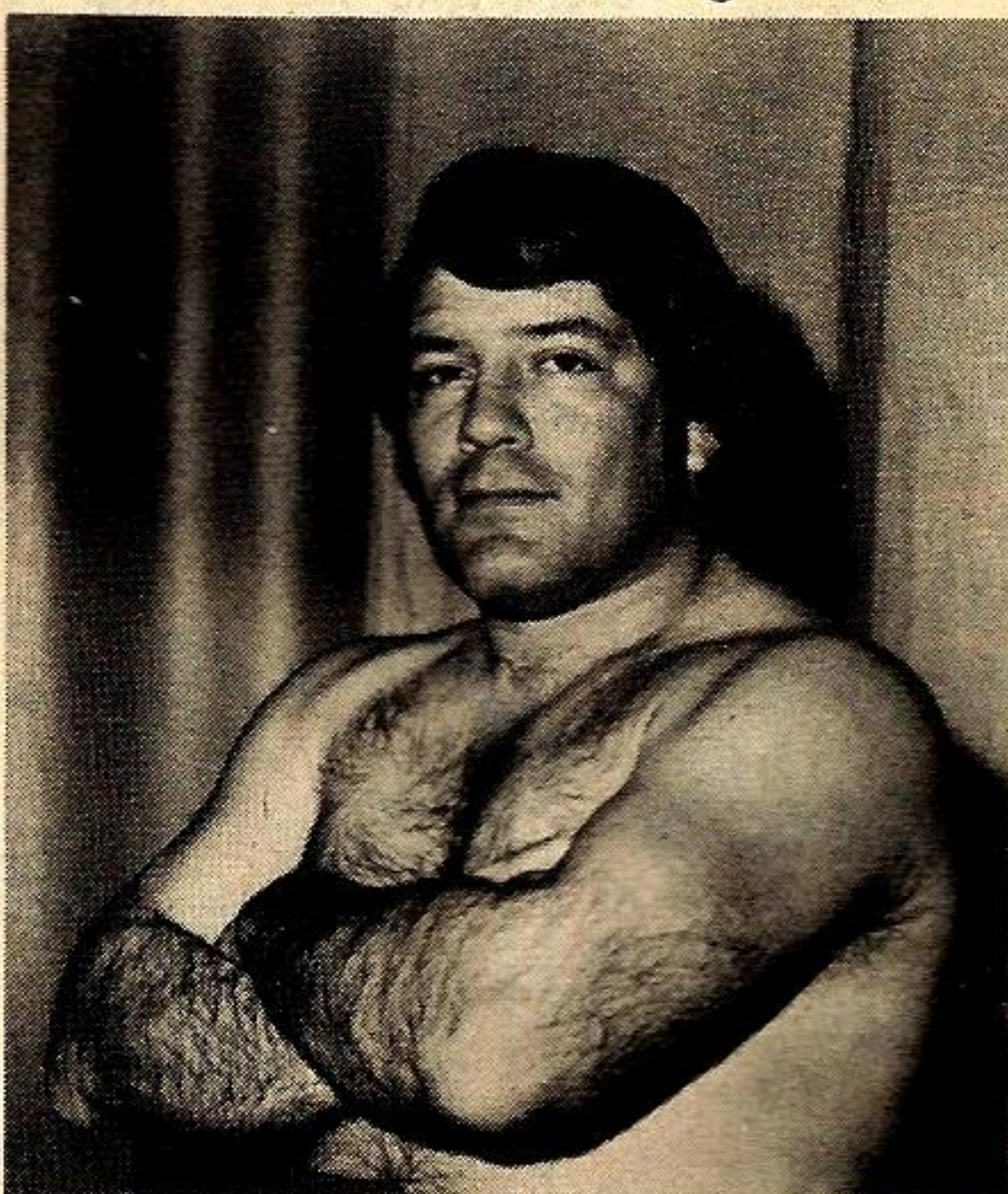
As you probably know by now, Verne Gagne lost the American Wrestling Association title to Nick Bockwinkel. And as of this writing there have been a few rematches, but Gagne has failed to win back the AWA's top honors. Bockwinkel's manager, Bobby Heenan, claims "Nick will be the longest reigning champion in the history of the AWA. He'll retire undefeated twenty years from now. Everyone will remember Nick as one of wrestling's immortals."

Paul Jones impressing everyone as he holds a strong grip on the United States heavyweight belt he won from Terry Funk just a few weeks before Funk went on to become NWA king.

"I beat Funk cleanly," states Jones. "I know I can beat him again and take the world title. I just hope



Terry Funk (above left) is the new NWA champion, winning the title from Jack Brisco (above right). Just a few weeks before the title changed hands, Paul Jones (below) won the U.S. belt from Funk in an exciting match.



Funk has more guts than Jack Brisco and won't run from me like Jack did. I feel my time has come and this year will be the year I win that belt."

Dick Slater and Bob Orton Jr. called it quits as a tag team. Their Georgia title belts are being put up for grabs in a tournament . . . Dino Bravo invading the south with his

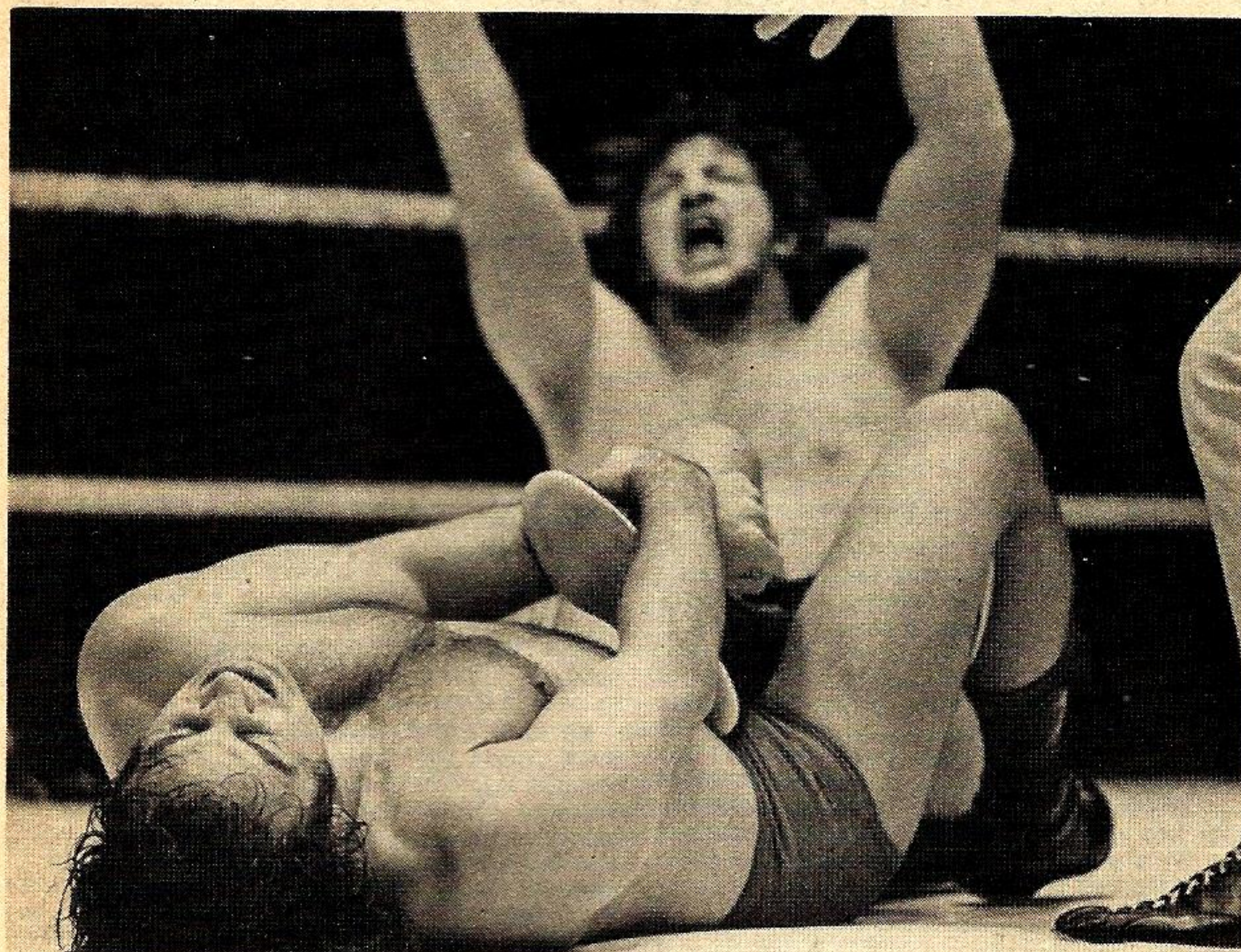
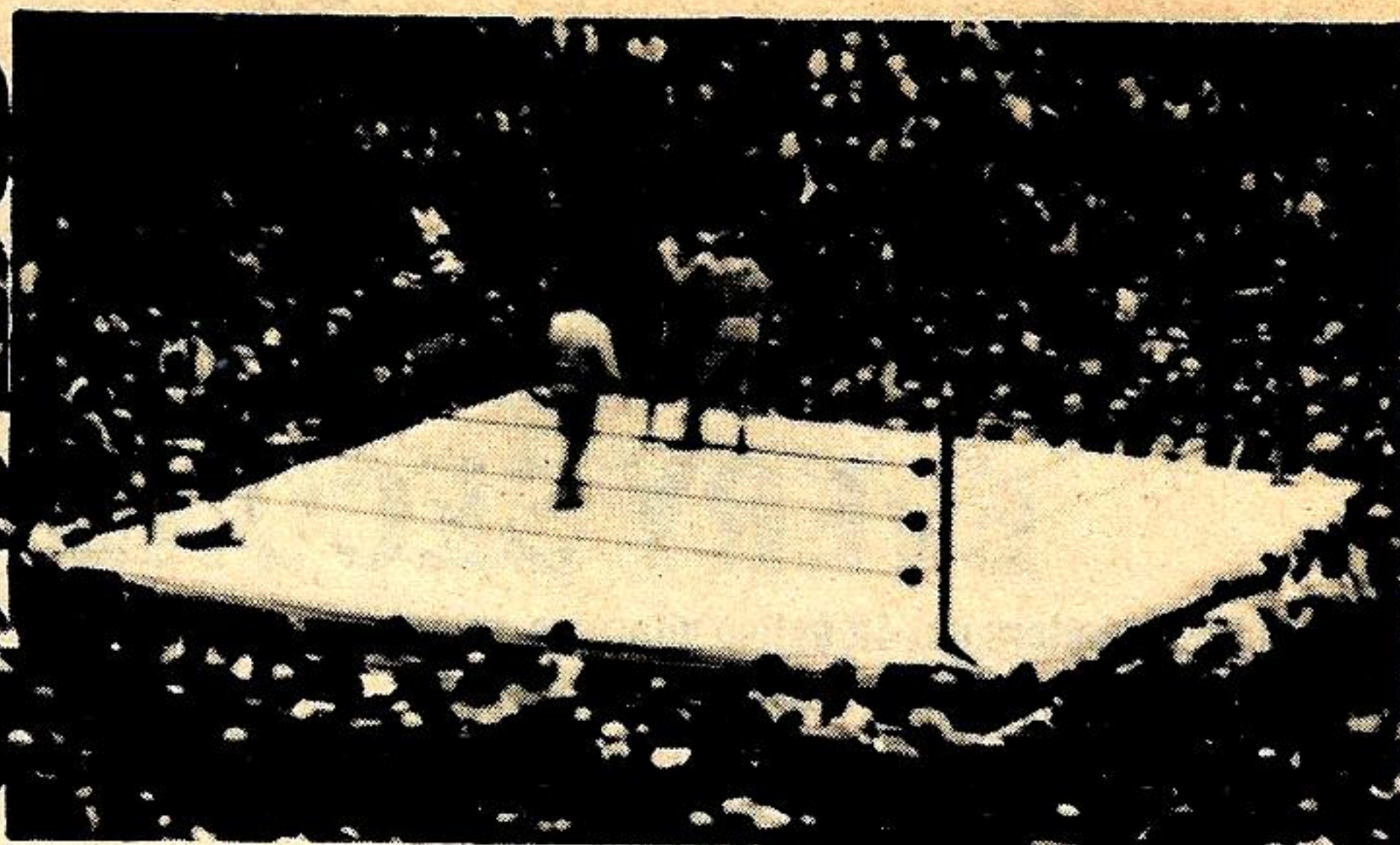
action packed style . . . Otto Von Heller threatening to go back to his native Germany "if the damn champions keep ducking me," as he put it . . . Ray Stevens and Nick Bockwinkel failed to win back the AWA tag belts from Bruiser and Crusher . . . Roger Kirby and Rip Hawk wearing the Florida tag team straps after upsetting Cyclone and Omar Negro . . . The Masked Infernos recaptured their "loaded" boot Raul Mata swiped from them a few months ago . . . Moondog Mayne torturing opponents in the south after a long and successful stint in California . . . Mil Mascaras returned to Houston, Texas, after a long absence. The fans gave the sensational masked Mexican star a standing ovation.

Steve Strong is a protege of Superstar Billy Graham. And Strong boasts, "Keep your eyes on me. I will be the next superstar of wrestling. My name will become a household word. Women will fall at my feet. Children will look up to me and call me their idol. I am handsome, fantastically built, and above all—modest." Graham agrees Strong will "go all the way to the title one day. He's got a great teacher, me. If Steve continues to follow in my footsteps, daddy, he can't lose!"

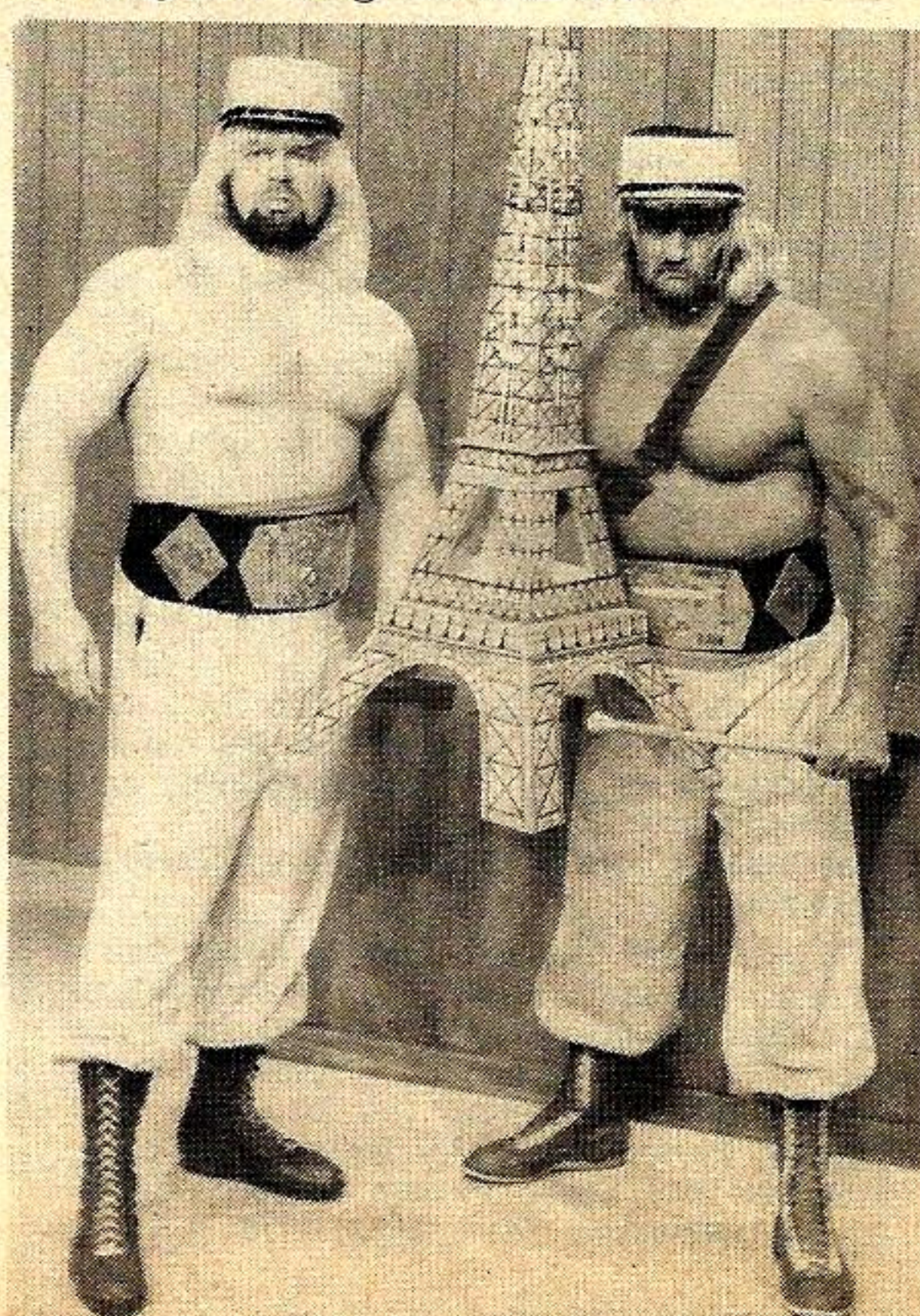
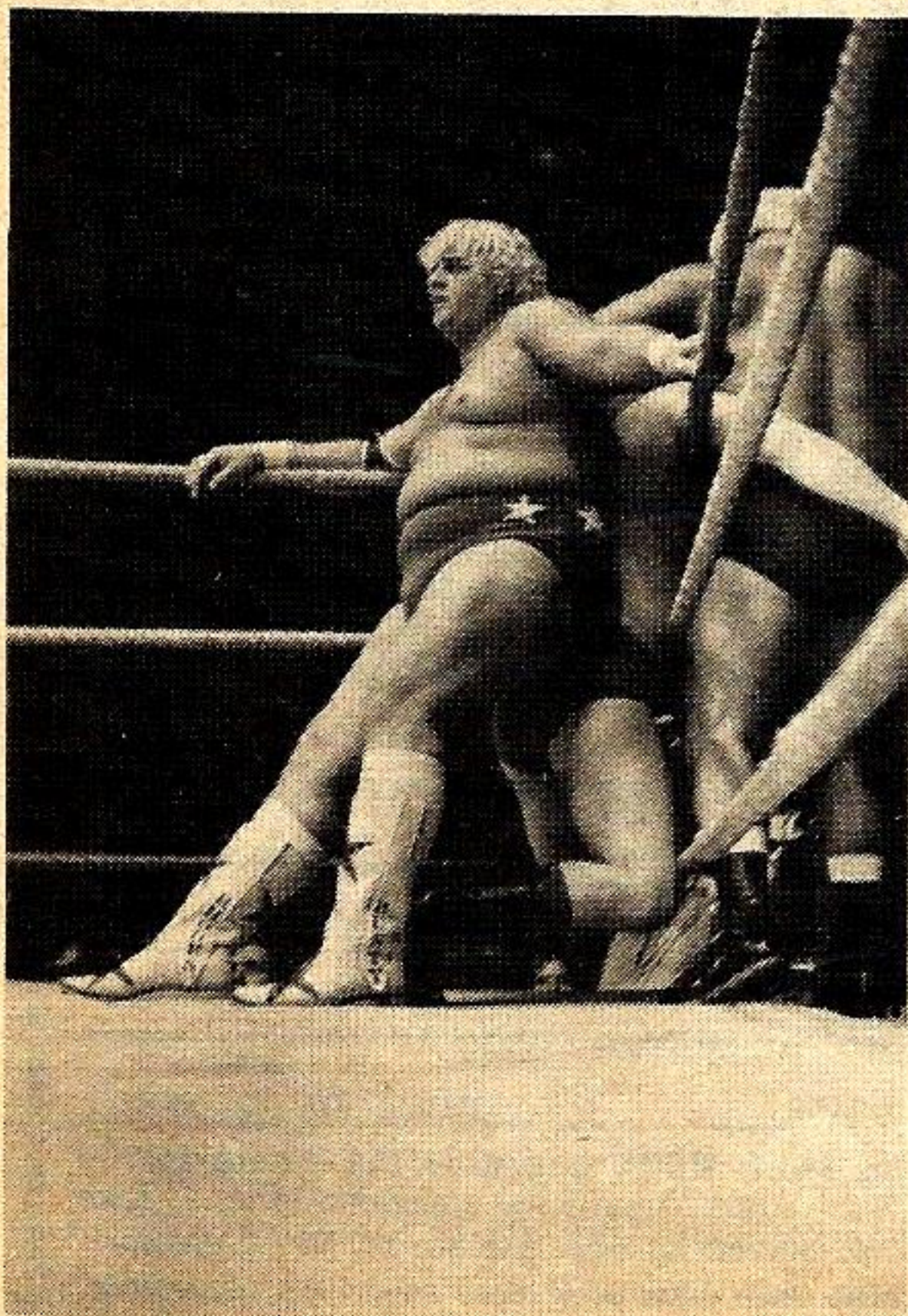
Antonio Inoki a big hit in his Madison Square Garden debut against Frank Monte. New Yorkers want to see more of this great Japanese ace . . . Mark Lewin says, "I'm out to burst Killer Kox's skull!" Their feud goes back many years and neither has any love for the other . . . The Spoiler and Manager Gary Hart claim they have run out of competition. "We'll have to take up another occupation if we don't get some decent matches soon," Hart boasts . . . Tony Garea vacationing in New Zealand . . . Pampero Firpo

(Continued on page 58)

YOUR LETTERS



Above: Terry Funk screams in pain from agony inflicted by Jack Brisco. This is one reason fans score Terry for calling Brisco a "coward," among other insults. Below left: The many fans of Dusty Rhodes continue to sing his praises in thousands of letters! Below right: The Legionnaires are enraging other members of their corps for using illegal tactics and smearing the Legion's name.



OFFENSE TAKEN

As a former member of the French Foreign Legion, I take offense when Jacques Goulet and Soldier LeBoeuf refer to themselves as The Legionnaires.

The Legion is a noble institution, consisting of men who live only to fight for justice and the glory of France. I have seen Goulet and LeBoeuf wrestle. Their tactics are reprehensible. They are nothing more than animals and a disgrace to the fine name of the Legion.

They should give themselves a more appropriate name, such as "Barbarians" or "Savages."

JEAN DUBOIS
Augusta, Maine

FAN OF DUSTY AND US

I love your wrestling magazines. I think they are the best. I loved the story, "The American Dream Hits a German Roadblock" (THE WRESTLER/December 1975).

Dusty Rhodes is my favorite. I think the "Dream" is cool and far out. When is Dusty going to team with Chief Wahoo McDaniel to tackle the Anderson Brothers and win the world tag team belts? I think they can sure win them!

WAYNE FIELDS
Greensboro, North Carolina

ANGRY LADY

In "You Asked Us" (THE WRESTLER/December 1975), Terry Funk called Jack Brisco a "coward" and "the most chicken champion" wrestling ever had.

What's the matter, Terry? Are you jealous? Does it bug you the handsome hunk from Oklahoma has the title and you or big brother Dory don't? Sure it does!

Listen, bum! The people of Texas may think you're wonderful, but there are many Briscoe fans everywhere else and we know what a loudmouth and

(Continued on page 48)

REPORTS FROM OUR CORRESPONDENTS



ILLINOIS ACTION
By Betty Chronister

THE TOP ACTION in Illinois this month was in the city of Peoria, where the main event featured a tag team match between Johnny and Jimmy Valiant vs Britisher Billy Robinson and partner Chris Taylor.

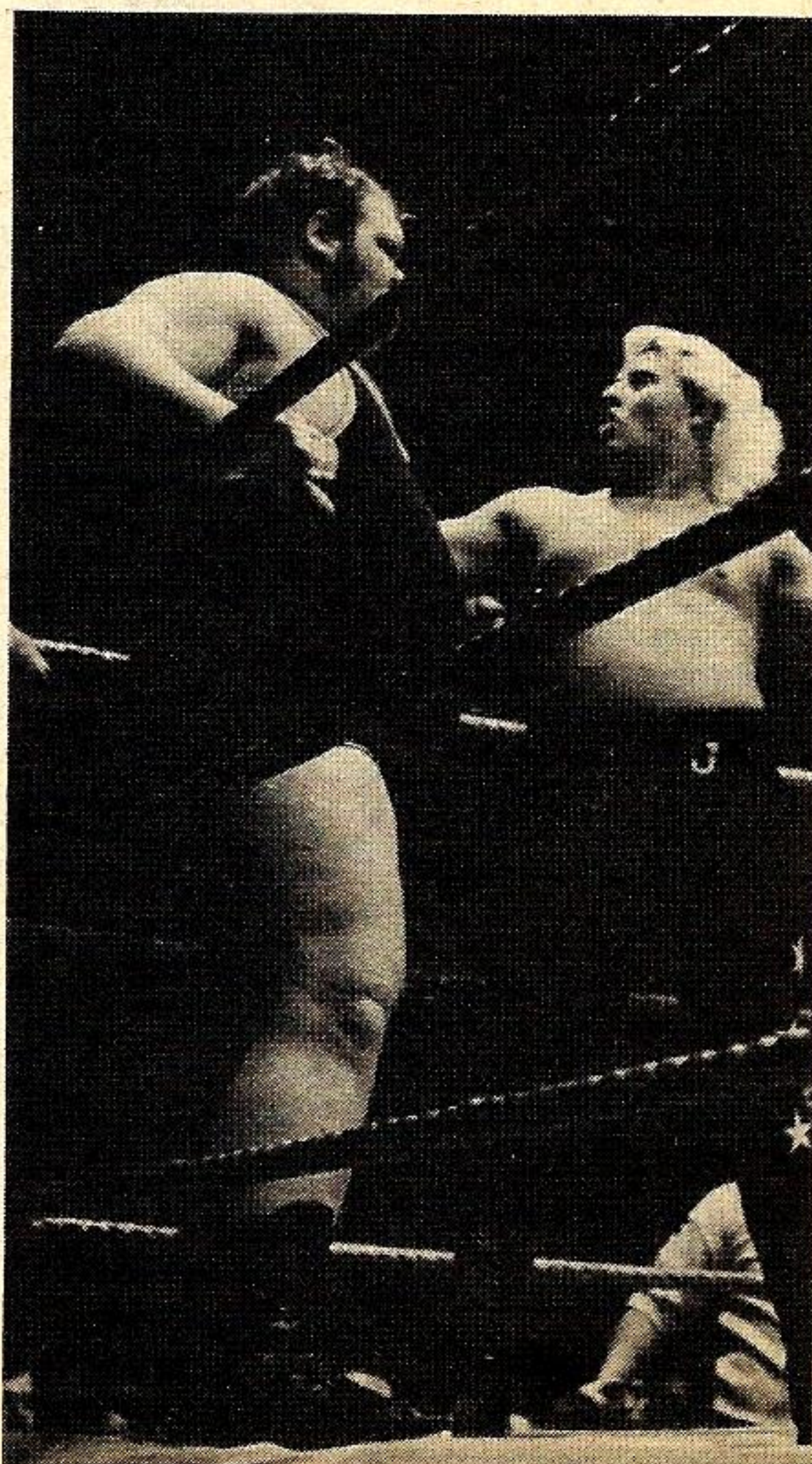
From the start of the match the Valiants knew they would have to use more than their skills to emerge victorious. Catching Robinson off guard, Jimmy was able to quickly win the first fall.

Chris Taylor came out in the second fall and began to body slam Johnny Valiant all over the ring. The blond grappler was visibly shaken by the punishment he was receiving. Taylor was able to press his advantage and was awarded the second fall.

The Valiants then put forth an all-out effort to win the final fall. Using illegal choking tactics, the Valiants were able to sufficiently weaken Chris Taylor. The blond rulebreakers won the final fall and the match, much to the crowd's displeasure.

In other action Pampero Firpo proved to be too much for Baron Von Raschke, with the two grapplers matching clawhold for clawhold. The match ended with the Baron outside the ropes . . . In midget wrestling, the

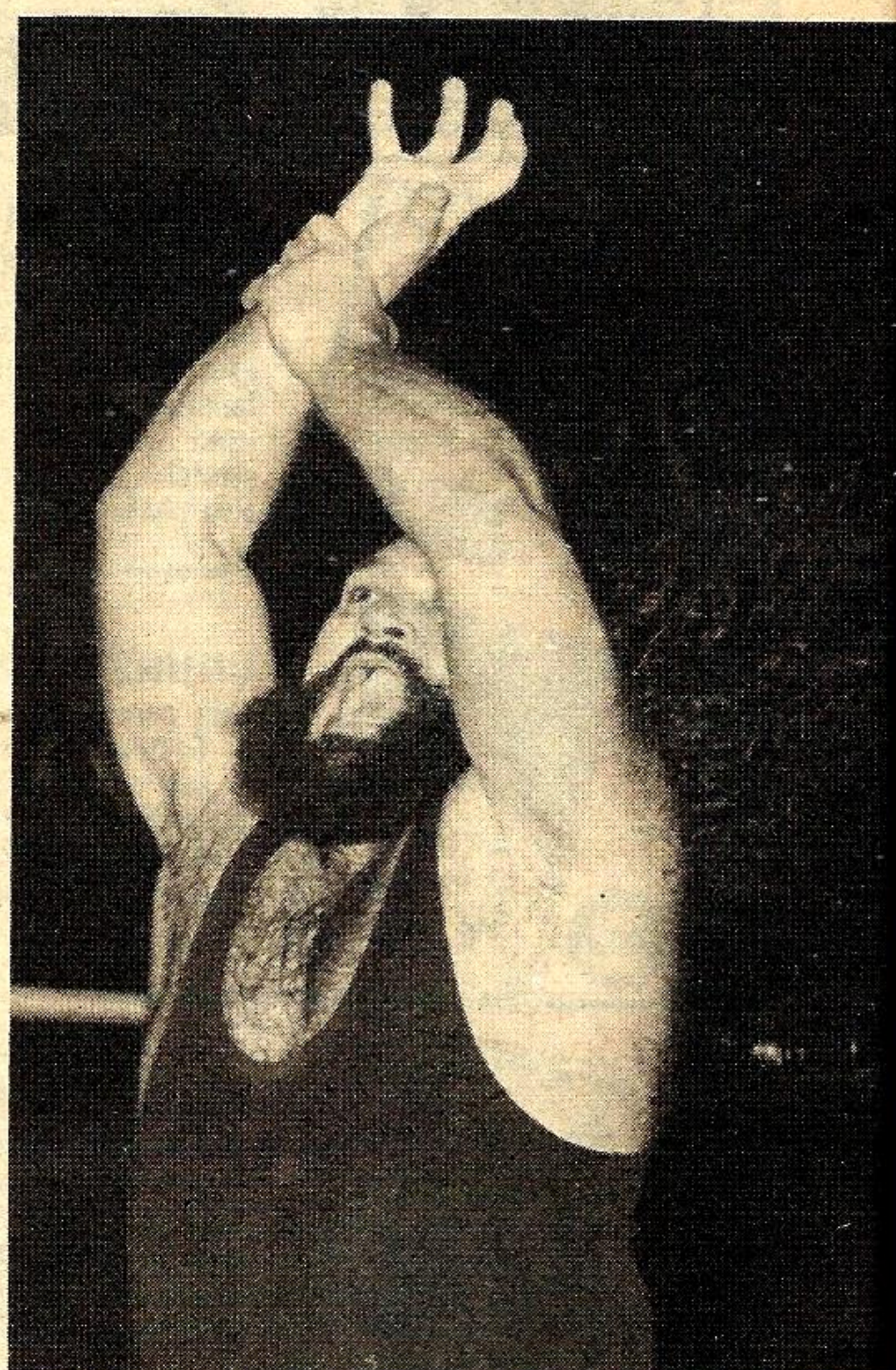
Above: Ernie Ladd relaxes after his tough match against popular Ivan Putski. Right: The wild Pampero Firpo proved to be too much for Baron Von Raschke in their battle. Below: Johnny Valiant prepares to punch Chris Taylor in a bloody, cruel bout.



tag team of Billy The Kid and Little Tokyo made quick work of Sonny Boy Hayes and Little Bobo . . . Kosrow Vaziri bested Don Wade in an extremely exciting match.

PHILADELPHIA REPORTS By Brian Harris

Philadelphia's frenetic fans went wild after the exciting match between wrestling's self-proclaimed king, Ernie



Ladd, and the personification of Polish Power, Ivan Putski.

The popular Polish mat star dominated most of the match, earning the admiration of the thousands of spectators. Ladd tried to employ several of his notorious dirty tactics, but Ivan was able to overcome the illegal moves for the most part.

Suddenly the match was turned around when Ladd brought a foreign object inside the ropes. Ernie began hitting and punching Putski with the object, causing the Polish wrestler to double over in pain.

Finally, after 39 minutes of battle, the referee stopped the action, declaring Putski was too weakened to continue. The match was awarded to Ladd. (Continued on page 60)

YOU ASKED US

Okay fans. You asked for it and here it is. Each month either **INSIDE WRESTLING** or **THE WRESTLER** will publish *your* column—"YOU ASKED US." Just jot down a question and the wrestler you'd like us to ask it to and send it to: **You Asked Us, THE WRESTLER, P.O. Box 58, Rockville Centre, N.Y. 11571.** Questions will be answered only in this column.



While Jack Brisco has been put in great pain by Wahoo McDaniel during many matches, Jack says he has no fear of McDaniel.

Q: When will Captain Lou Albano bring the Valiant Brothers back to the World Wide Wrestling Federation areas?—Charlie Schmidt, Lindenhurst, New York

A: "If they're not back by the time you're reading this, you'll be seeing them in the very near future," reports the Captain. "The fans miss 'em, their millions of friends miss 'em, I miss 'em—everyone does!"

They are great, sensational, superb, and fantastic. And with the Captain in their corner, daddy, you've got the most tremendous trio in the world!"

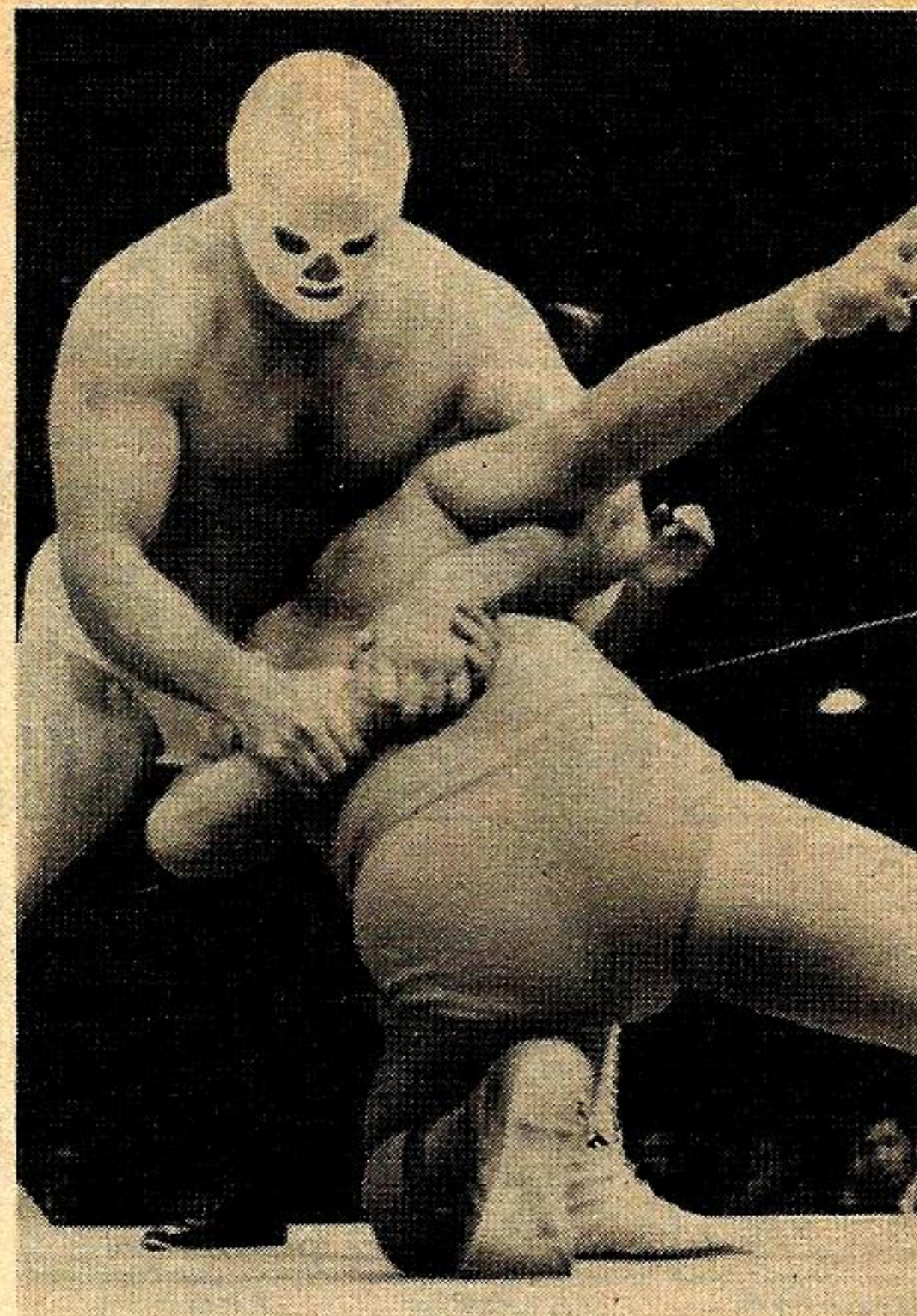
Q: After nearly losing the NWA title to Bruno Sammartino, ask former title holder Harley Race what he thinks of Sammartino, even though he wrestled him a few years ago—Dave Booth, Agincourt, Ontario

A: "He's an overrated bum!" explodes Race whenever he is questioned about Bruno. "You know, I wiped the floor with that bum once and I'd like to do it again. But every time I look for a match against that chicken, I'm told he's too busy to wrestle me. He's not too busy, he's just too damn scared!"

Q: I have two questions. When will Ricki Starr return to the United States? I'm told he lives in England. Secondly, is it true he once appeared on the old "Mr. Ed" television show as a wrestler named Tiger Davis?—John Sweeney, Sayville, New York

A: Ricki wrestled in the United States last summer for the IWA. He doesn't plan to return to the States for quite some time. Yes John, it was Ricki on the "Mr. Ed" program!"

Q: Why is Jack Brisco so scared of Wahoo McDaniel?—Lynne Barker, Greensboro, North Caro-



Mr. Wrestling's skill is truly admired by Mr. Wrestling II; in return, Mr. Wrestling II is considered one of the great mat stars around by Mr. Wrestling.

lina

A: "I'm not afraid of anyone," states Brisco. "If you're referring to an incident in Greensboro where I walked out of the ring during my match with Wahoo, that was because the referee, in my opinion, was being totally partial to Wahoo. He was allowing McDaniel to get away with murder!"

Q: Ask Jerry "The King" Lawler where he got his crown—Gary Hutchens, Bolton, Tennessee

A: "It was custom made in Europe especially for me," says Jerry.

Q: What do Tim "Mr. Wrestling" Woods and Mr. Wrestling II think of each other?—Beverly Peters, Ozark, Alabama

A: "We belong to a mutual admiration society," Woods candidly admits. "Tim and I are real good friends," adds II. "We are a good team and hope to hold the world tag team title one day."

Q: Where is Bobby Duncum?—David Bulger, Manset, Maine

A: Duncum is bustin' heads in the AWA areas.

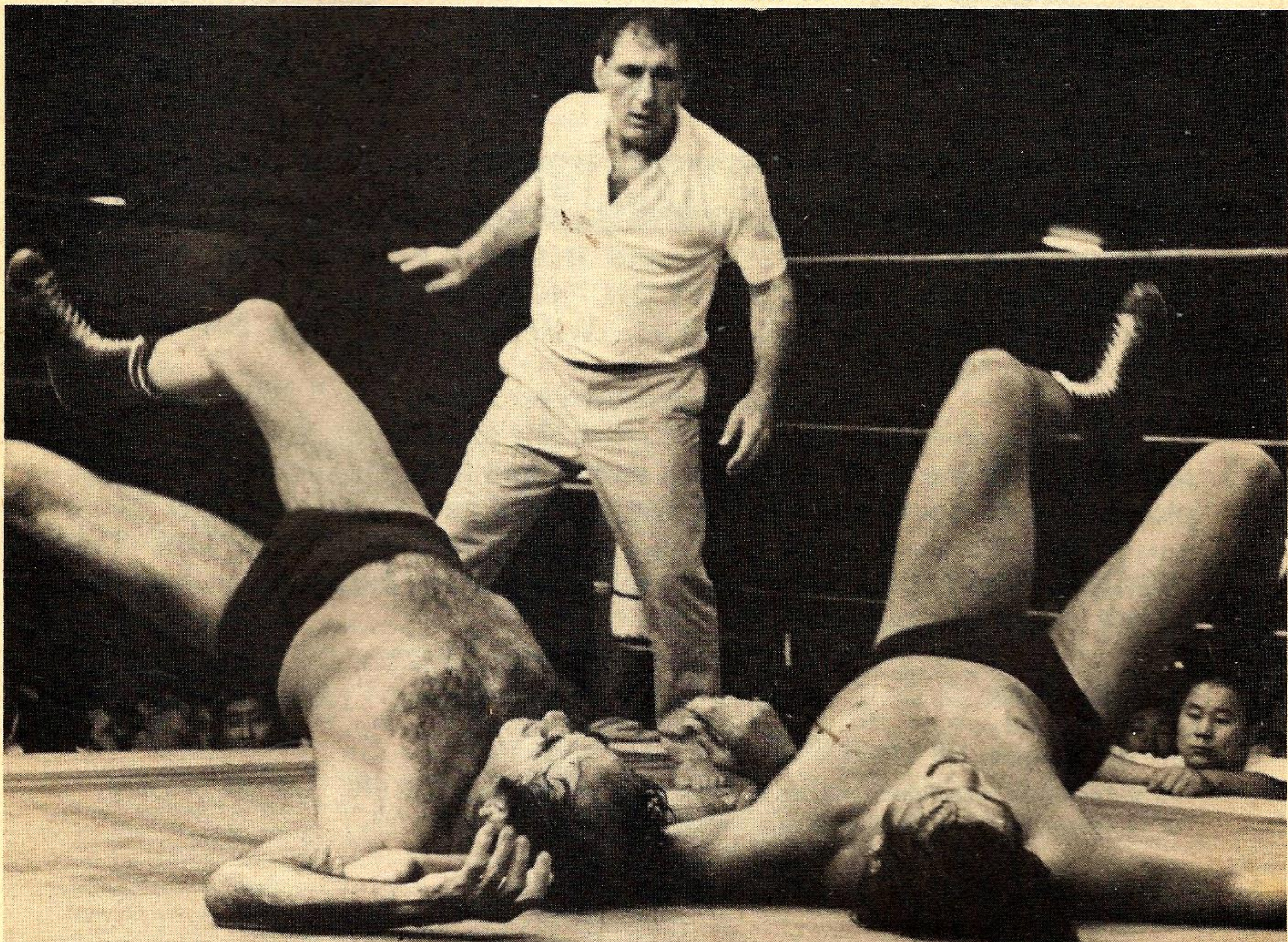
Q: Who is Dusty Rhodes' favorite Florida tag team partner?—Don Overly, Leola, Pennsylvania

A: "There are many partners I call my favorite," admitted Big Dust. "Rocky Johnson, Mark Lewin, and my ol' buddy Dick Murdoch, just to name a few."

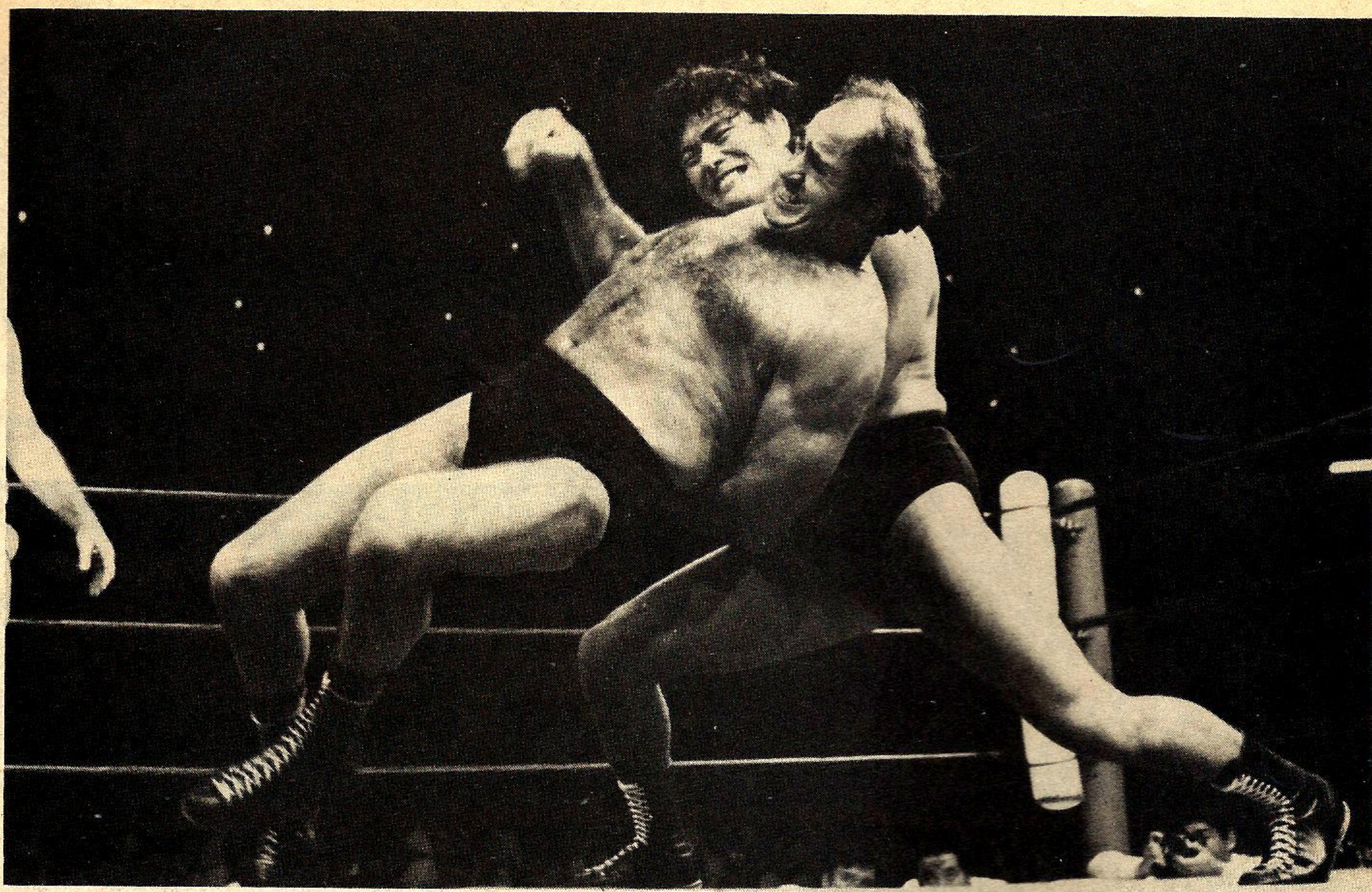
(Continued on page 62)

THE MAGNIFICENT BATTLE OF THE CHAMPIONS

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE TOKYO SPORTS SHIMBUN & MINORU AOKI



The most knowledgeable wrestling fans in the world journeyed to a Japanese arena for the privilege of watching Antonio Inoki and Lou Thesz wrestle.



THE FANS FILLED the Japanese arena, avidly discussing the upcoming match. Two great grapplers, champions of the highest order, would be pitting their considerable skills against each other in what promised to be one of the most remarkable scientific matches: Lou Thesz had traveled half way around the world to meet Antonio Inoki.

Both men have had remarkable careers, earning the honors most wrestlers can only dream of attaining. Lou and Antonio have both been world champions and are respected all over the globe. Each is assured an honorable place in the history of professional wrestling.

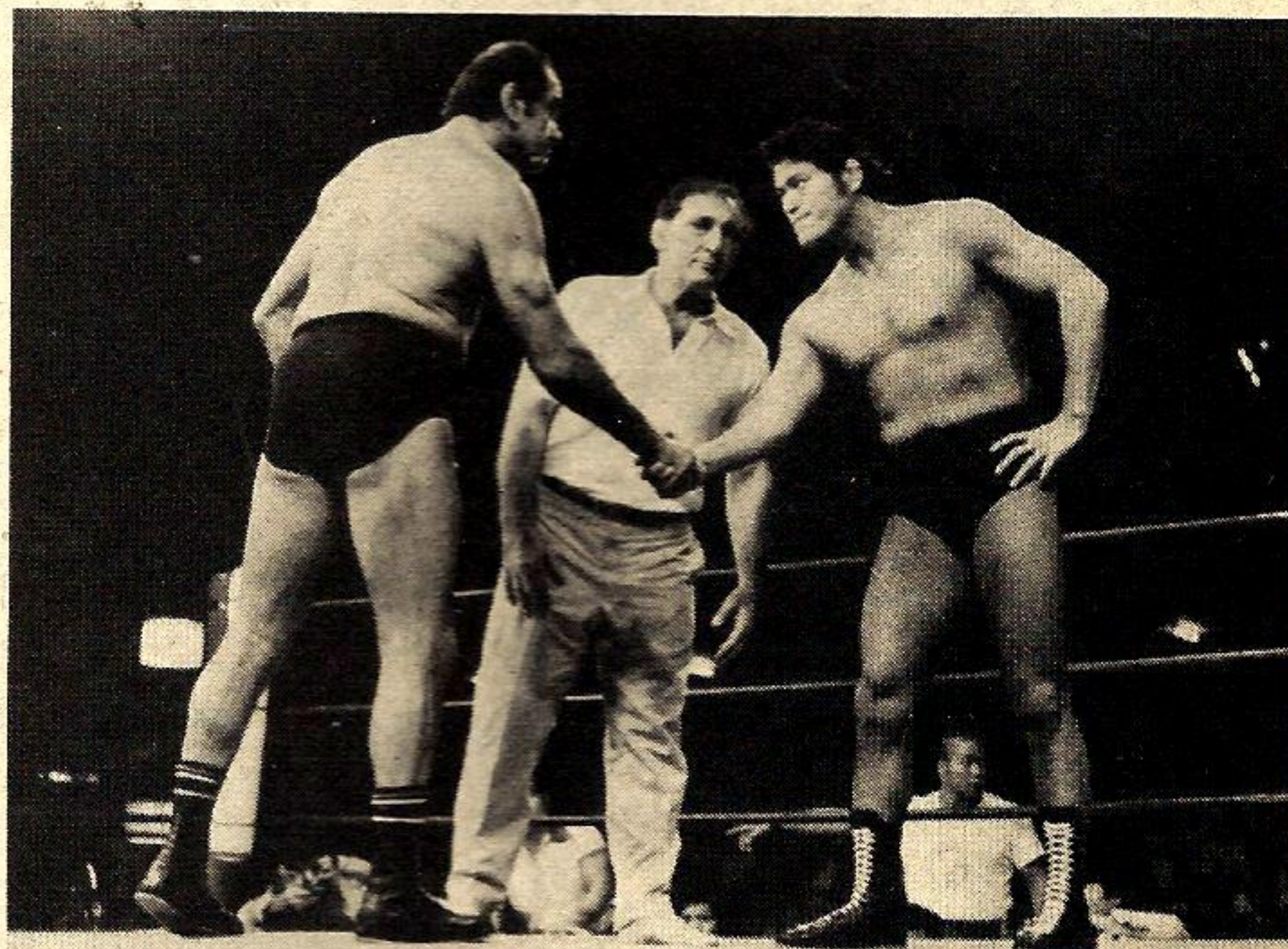
Fans agreed that while they hoped Inoki would be the victor, they had come to see a fabulous confrontation rather than root for their national hero.

"When you have two highly skilled professionals," Antonio Rocca, the special referee for this bout, explained, "you come to see scientific wrestling at its best. It is the contest itself—what happens between the two men—which is important. Cheering for one over the other would deprive a spectator of much of the match's enjoyment."

Inoki and Thesz also regarded this match as a special bout.

"This is one of the battles I'll be remembered for," Lou admitted, "one

Above: Antonio brings Thesz to the canvas with a brilliantly executed and very difficult hammerlock late in the match. Before he was down, Lou had devised a means of escape from it. Right: Lou and Antonio meet in the middle of the ring for the traditional handshaking.



of the high points in my career. When people look back on this era in wrestling, guys will be judged on how well they did against Inoki. He'll be one of the greats other guys will be compared to."

Inoki was equally impressed with the importance of this match.

"All my life," he declared, "I've admired the skill of Lou Thesz. At times I've been shocked by his ruthless tactics, but I've never underestimated his great skill. I don't think there's a wrestler alive today who hasn't in some way been influenced by Thesz, whether they want to admit it or not."

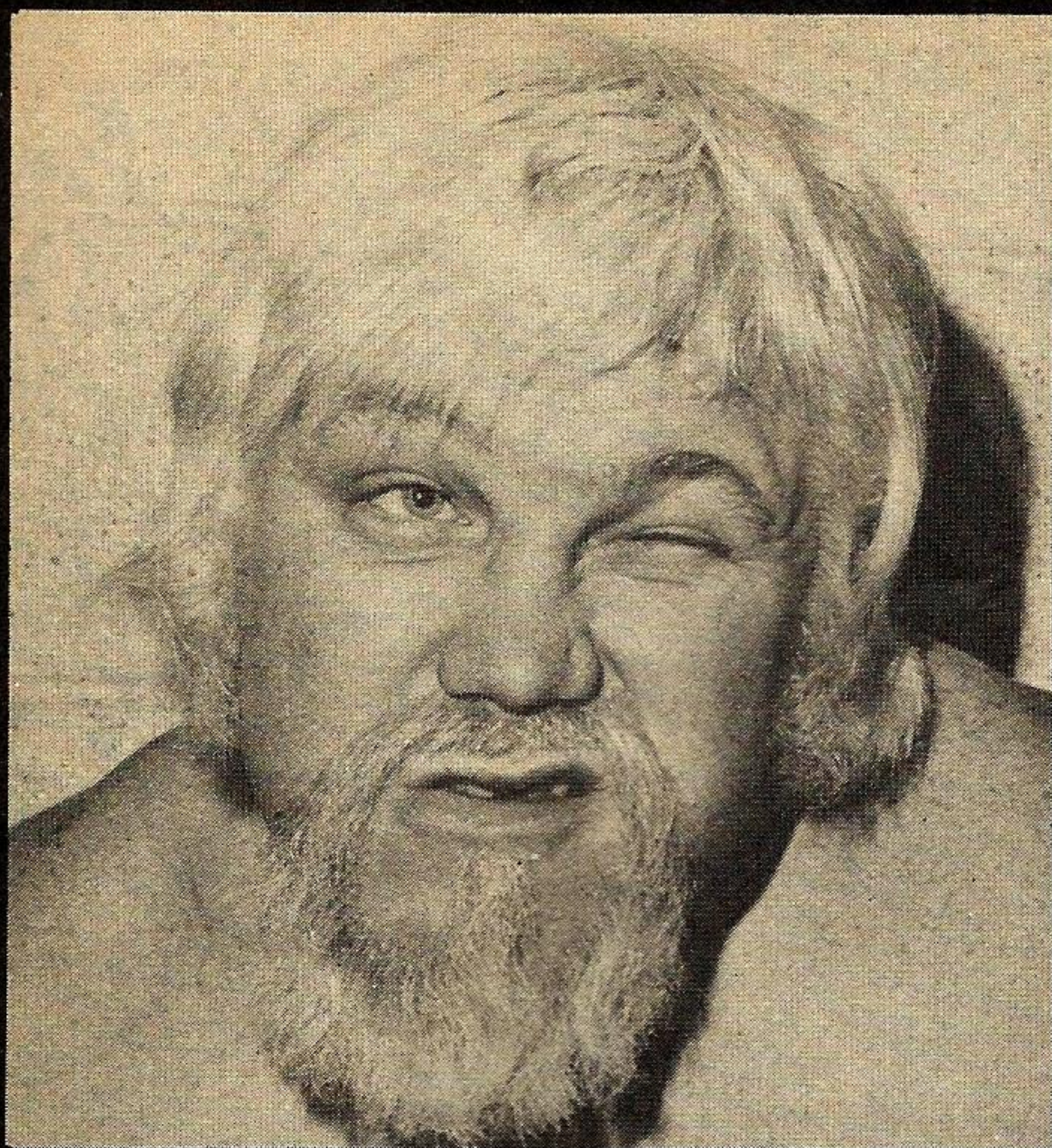
"When you wrestle Lou, you're aware he knows everything you can

do—and how to counter your every move. You can't afford to be less than perfect. I'll probably become more exhausted from my intense concentration than anything else. One second of inattentiveness could mean the end of the match."

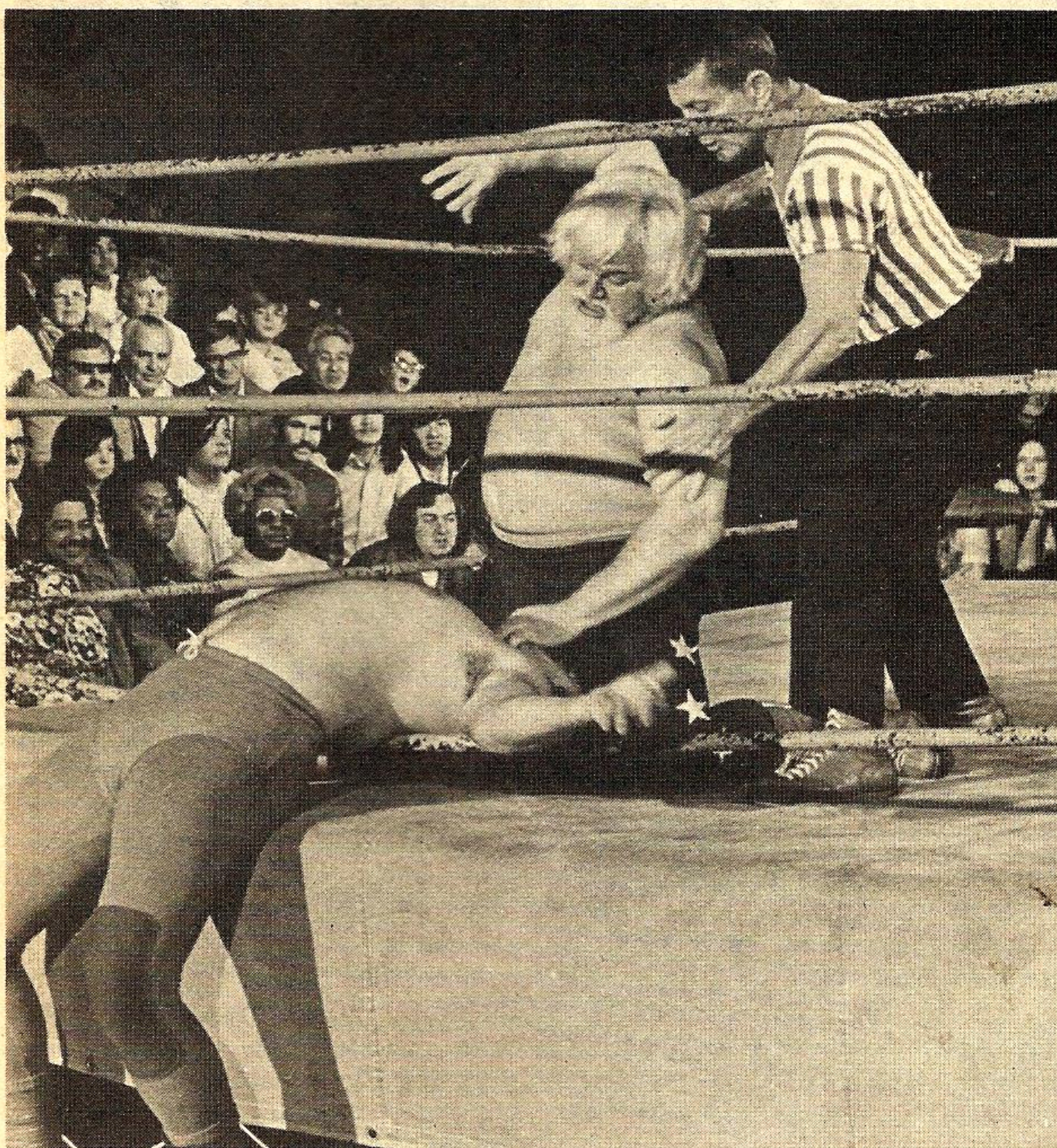
When the two men entered the arena the crowd cheered respectfully rather than boisterously. These were wrestling *aficionados*, more impressed with a subtle maneuver than a roundhouse punch. They had come to the right match.

From the beginning it was war between expert professionals, each man striving toward his personal peak.

(Continued on page 46)



"HOW PROFES WREST



Although Salvador Lothario is half outside the ring and helpless, Mayne thinks nothing of continuing to pound away at his hapless victim. Watching Mayne wrestle can make one believe he actually did grow up in a wolfpack! There is no denying Mayne is one of the most primitively brutal men to ever become a mat warrior!

BY MOONDOG MAYNE

I WILL NEVER forget how I was found by hunters in the Oregon woods. Along with the rest of my wolfpack, I was contentedly howling at the moon when these men chanced upon us. For a long time I realized I was different from the other animals. When I saw the hunters looked like me, I figured I'd found my pack.

I loped toward the hunters, thinking they would accept me immediately. Instead, they started to run away. Figuring they were playing, I ran after them.

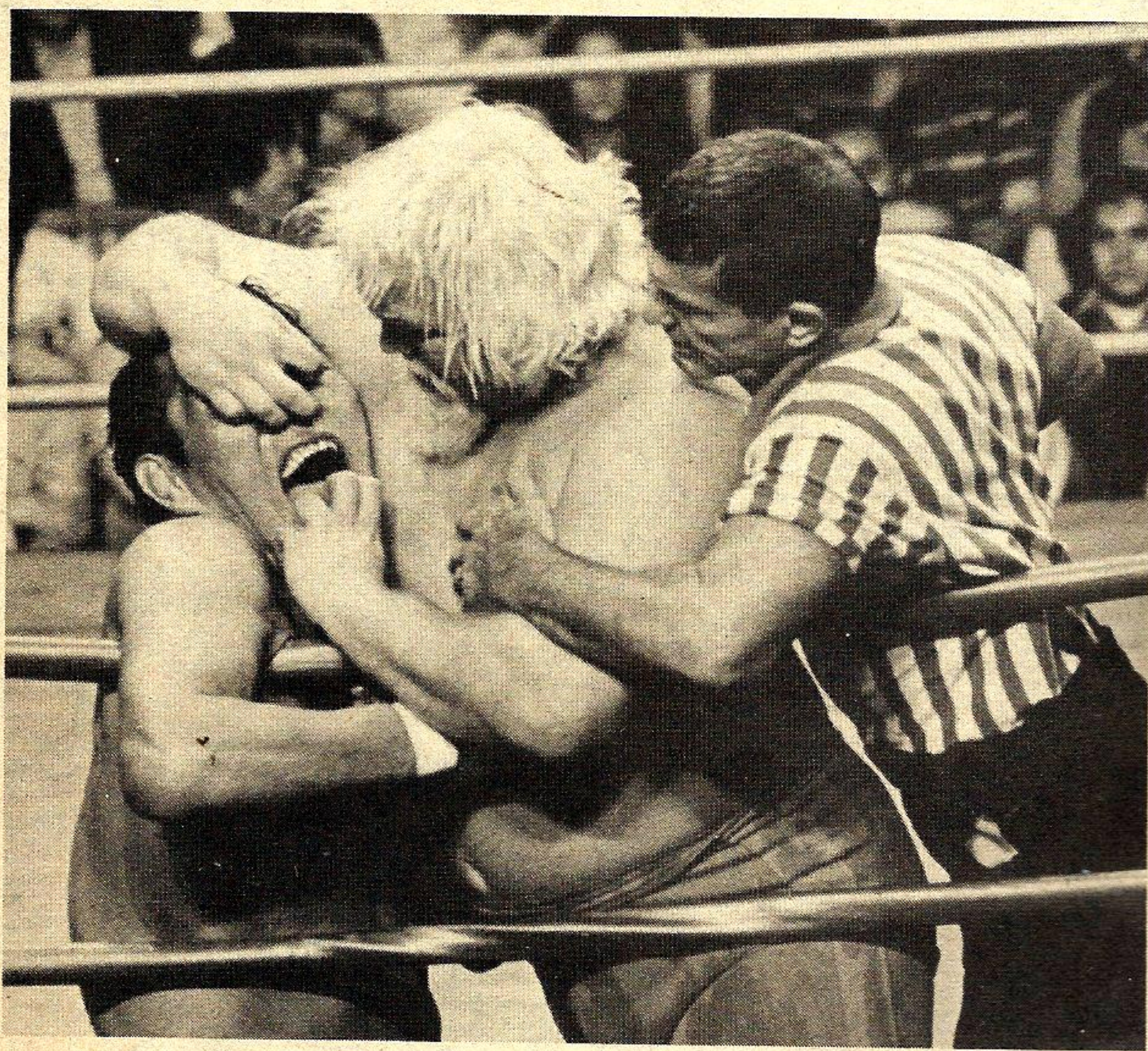
I finally caught up with them after they fled into their cars. As they stared out at me through their windows, they realized I wasn't going to hurt them. One man called the police on a walkie-talkie he had and two squad cars came tearing up five minutes later. They put a net over me and dragged me back to civilization.

After they had psychologists and those type of people examine me, they wondered how I could earn a living. They tried to think of some way I could use my strength to get some money. My "keepers" thought a while and decided to make me a professional wrestler.

Well, I took to wrestling like a fish takes to water. Within six months, I was ready to be a professional mat star. It was what I was born to do.

I BROKE INTO PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING"

Our office is constantly flooded with letters asking how to become a professional grappler. We decided the only ones who really know are the professional wrestlers themselves. Therefore, each month a different wrestler will describe the trials and tribulations endured on the path to wrestling stardom



With cruel determination, Mayne tries to break Pak Song's jaw in two. Even the angry commands of the referee to stop the torture mean nothing to Moondog; all he cares about is making sure his foe never forgets the agony suffered at the hands of Moondog Mayne!

When I first started out, my innocence made me get hurt a lot! Wolves may fight to the death, but they're not cheaters. I couldn't believe what my opponents were doing. But it didn't take me long to

learn the ropes.

I can now take care of myself against anybody. Ain't nobody going to make a fool out of me. Moondog Mayne mastered every trick in the world within a year. Of course, I

don't need them to win, but it's nice to know how to combat these fools.

When I grew to be the most popular star in wrestling (around my second match), I enjoyed celebrating my victories with a wild howl, just as my friends in the wolfpack would do. I found out it terrified and astounded the fans. That is when I decided to bring my wolfpack experiences to the ring.

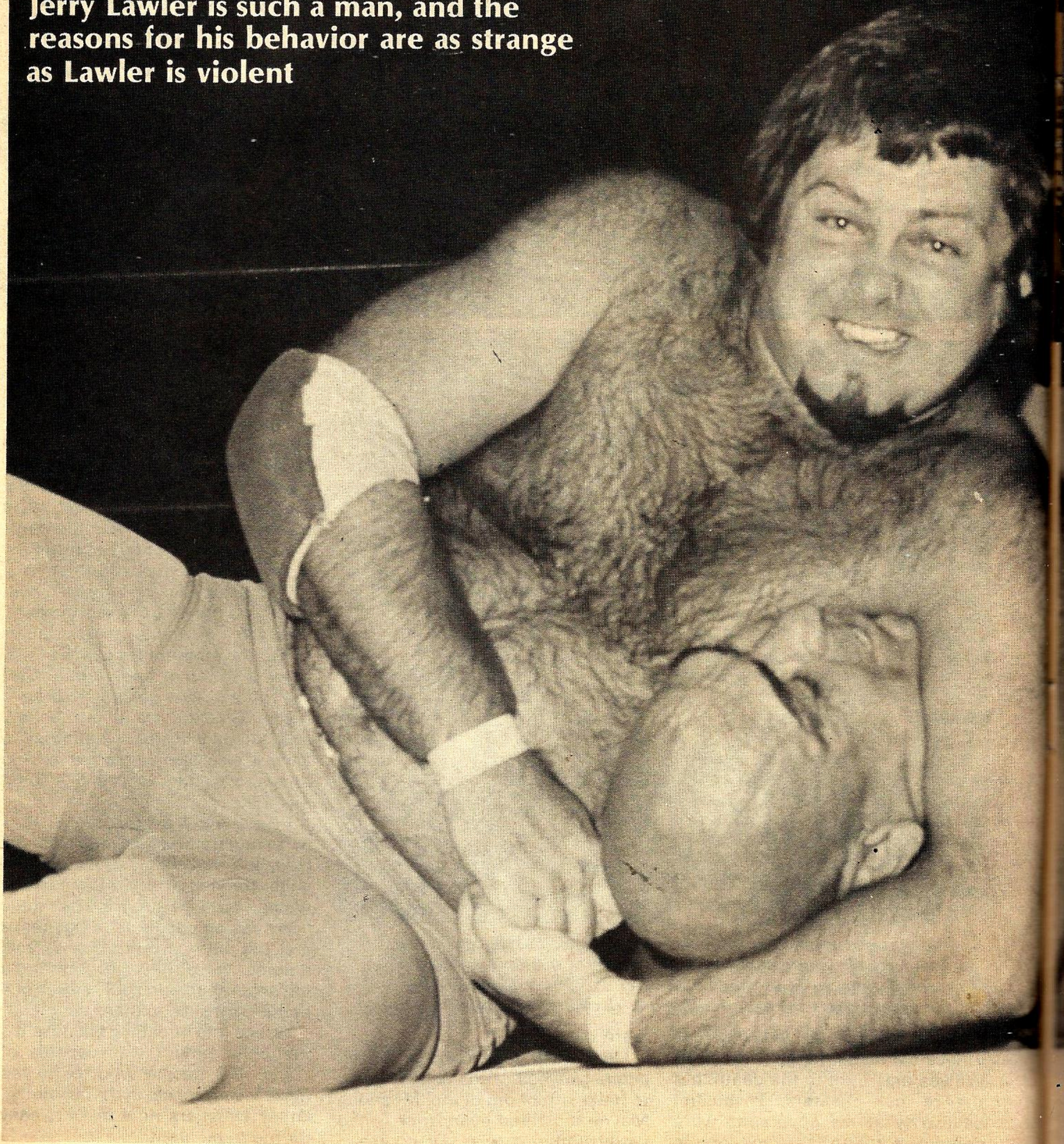
In the woods, an animal never cooks his prey. I got used to eating raw fish. Actually, a fish tastes better the moment it's caught—any dumb fisherman knows that. So I like to eat live goldfish before a match. Goldfish are instant energy and taste delicious when they're alive. I also like the screams from fans as the little fishie slides down my gullet.

Everything I do the stupid fans don't understand I learned from my pals, the wolves. They live in the wilds, thriving where weak men and women couldn't survive. The things I do causing people to cringe make me big and strong, like a wild animal. Wolves have been around a lot longer than people. They will still be here after people are gone.

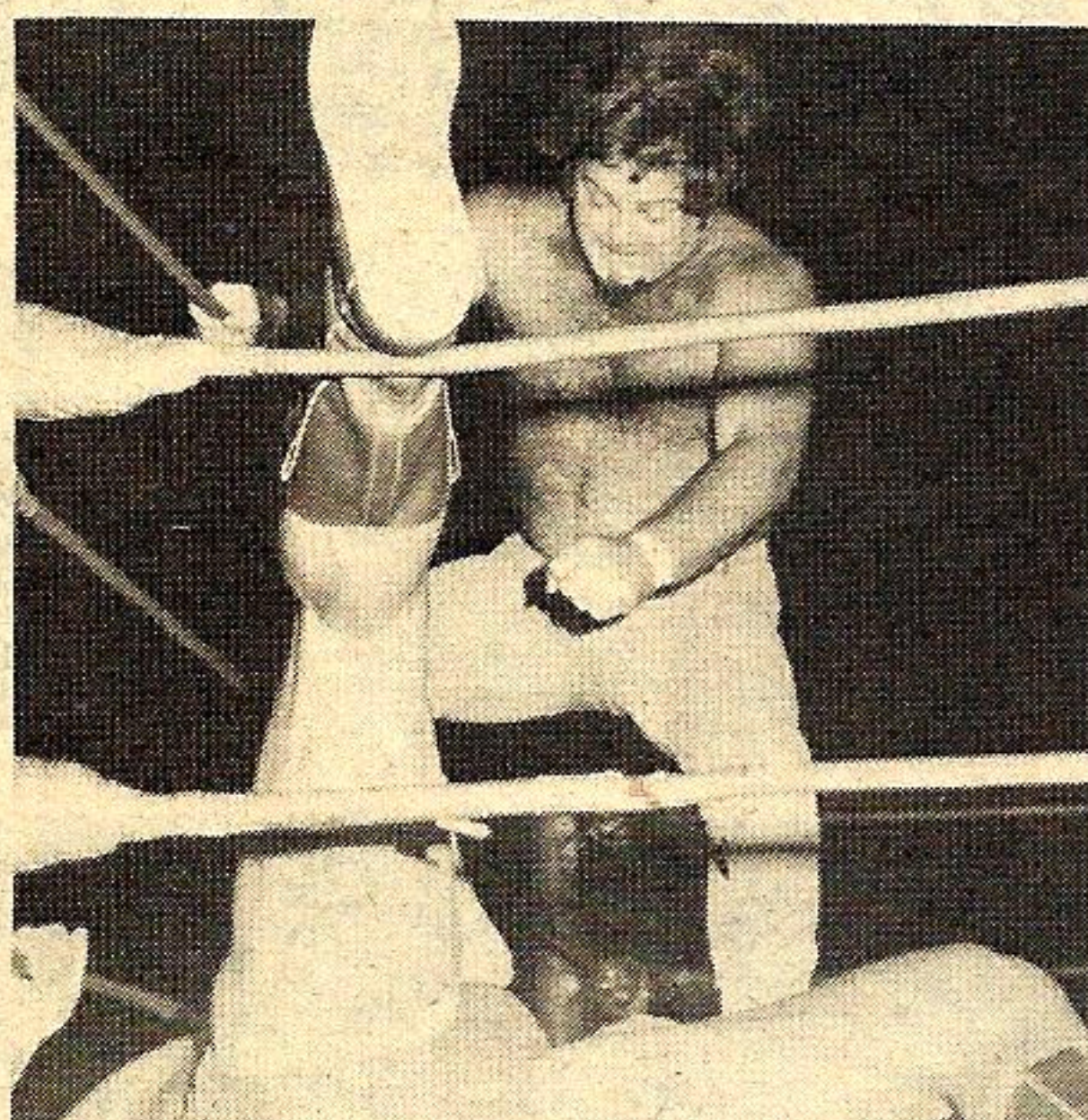
I broke into wrestling because it's the only thing I was capable of doing. The people who found me made it easy for me in the beginning. Other wrestlers now make it easy for me to be great. □

THE VIOLENT

What motivates a man to delight so much in taking great risks and punishing opponents? Jerry Lawler is such a man, and the reasons for his behavior are as strange as Lawler is violent



WORLD OF JERRY LAWLER



Even against a man as savage as Mongolian Stomper (left, above right, and above left), Lawler manages to prove he's a wildly and cruelly violent grappler. Jerry's brutality knows no bounds.

THE HUMAN BODY can withstand just a certain amount of punishment before the reflexes refuse to obey the brain's signals. At that moment, a professional athlete's career is over. His opponents usually discover this before the athlete does; if the man is lucky, he will survive to realize the truth himself.

Most professional wrestlers are understandably cautious about their bodies; even the most savage grappler will spend years perfecting defenses to protect himself. The future effects of a beating will be far worse than any immediate agony.

There are a few reckless wrestlers who battle for the moment with no regard for their future. They wrestle as if each match was their last. They take crazy chances even in relatively unimportant matches. They glory in an existence more violent than any other professional athlete dares to endure. The price they pay for this wrestling method is indeed very high.

One of the most reckless of all wrestlers is Jerry Lawler. Driven by

some need no one has yet been able to define, Lawler pushes himself heedlessly toward his violent end. Even the men who most hate Lawler are awed by his total disregard for self-preservation.

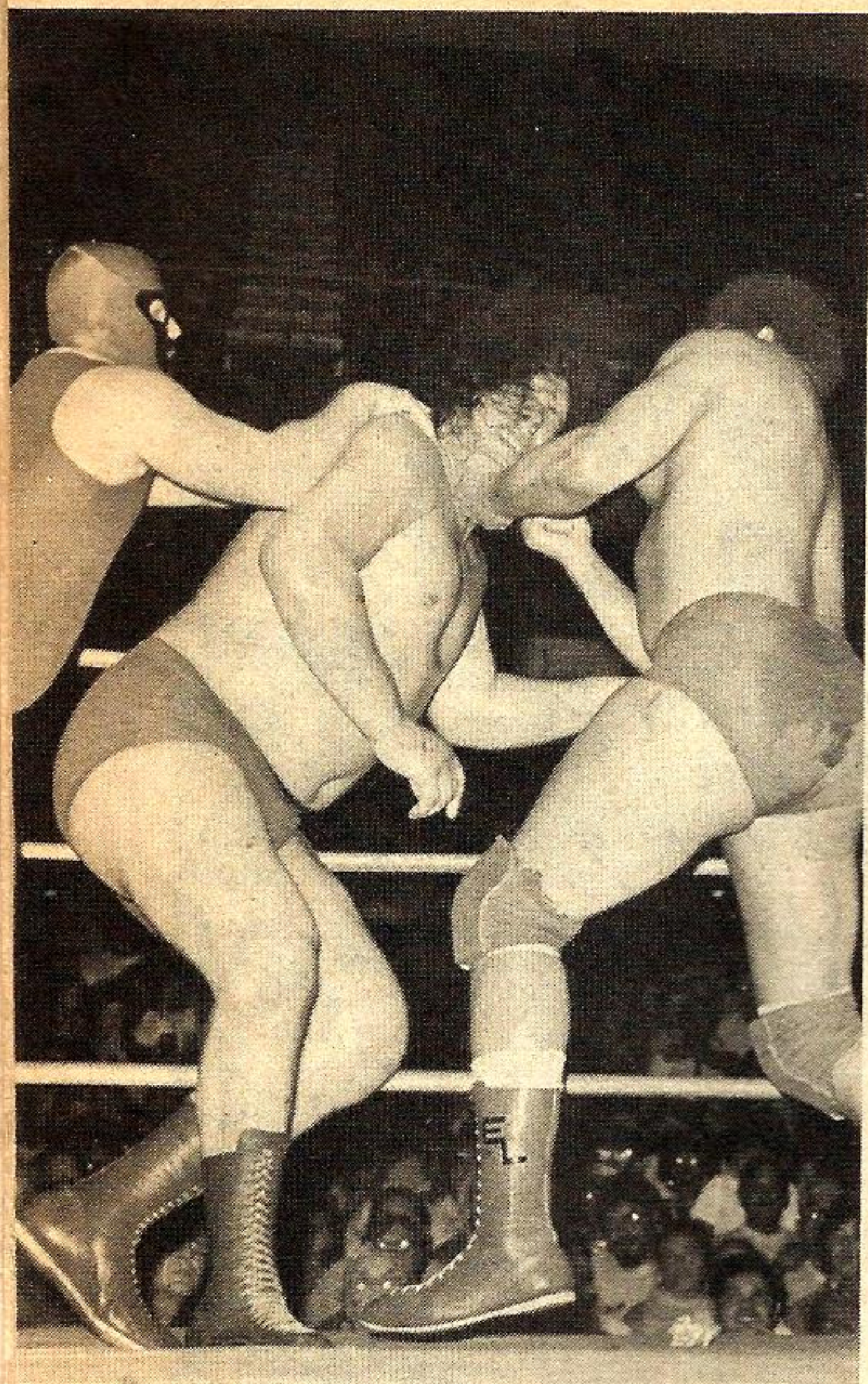
Perhaps one reason Lawler is so violent an athlete is he enjoys the reactions his violence brings from other wrestlers. His eyes glisten with delight as he confounds opponents with needlessly dangerous maneuvers.

It cannot be denied Jerry is aware of the risks he takes. He even enjoys discussing his dangerously unorthodox techniques.

"As I can figure it," Lawler says casually, "you have only so many years in this business to begin with. What do a few years more or less mean. Anyway, I'm so good, so skilled, I don't even have to worry about most of the clowns I face. They couldn't hurt me with an elephant gun!"

"The few guys I face who could actually make a match of it are at a disadvantage before I even enter the

(Continued on page 52)



ANDRE THE GIANT sat quietly in the dark park reflecting on what had happened to him only a few short hours before in the wrestling arena. He had never been as terrified in his life as he had been on this night. And with good reason.

He sat and thought about his actions over the past few months; how he had pushed himself too much in his efforts to be the best and most popular wrestler in

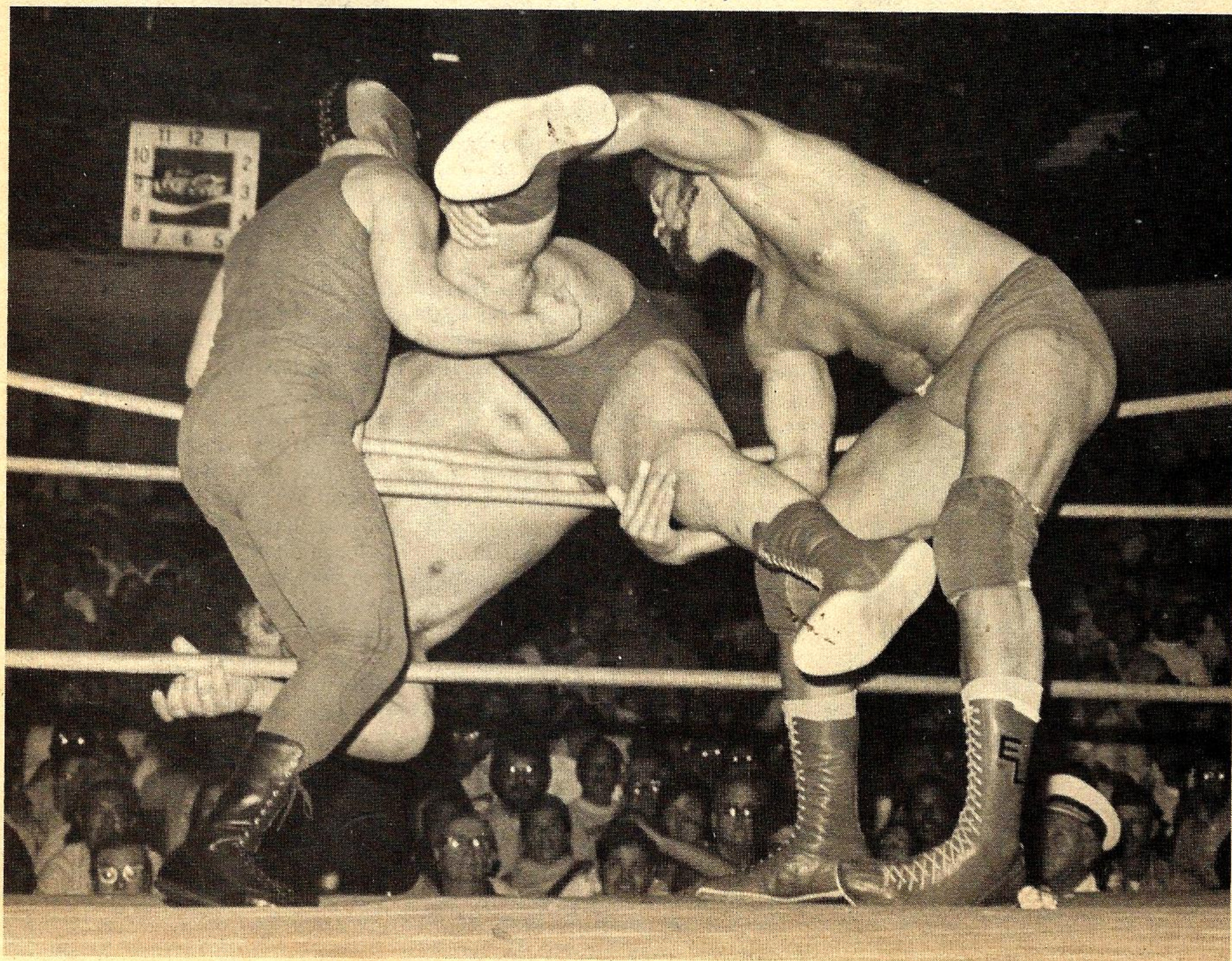
history. His friends kept advising him to ease off a bit, but their wisdom fell on deaf ears. Now, all his actions were coming back to him with a vengeance.

Suddenly he saw his world with a new perspective.

On that cold, dark, moonless night, Andre reaffirmed his resolution to become the greatest wrestler of all time. But the vow was tinged with a certain regret—Andre saw pushing himself too hard was not

ANDRE T NIGH

Ernie Ladd and Inferno II savage Andre the Giant along the ropes (left); satisfied the gargantuan grappler is sufficiently weakened, they hoist him over the ropes and repeatedly bash his head into the hard floor (below).



Andre the Giant's popularity continues to grow. So does the hatred of his enemies. Those who despise Andre are becoming more and more successful in their war against this gargantuan mat great

PHOTOS BY THEO EHRET

helping him to achieve his goal. If he didn't ease up some, he would be dead before he was recognized as the greatest wrestler in history.

And from what he experienced that night, he knew he did not like

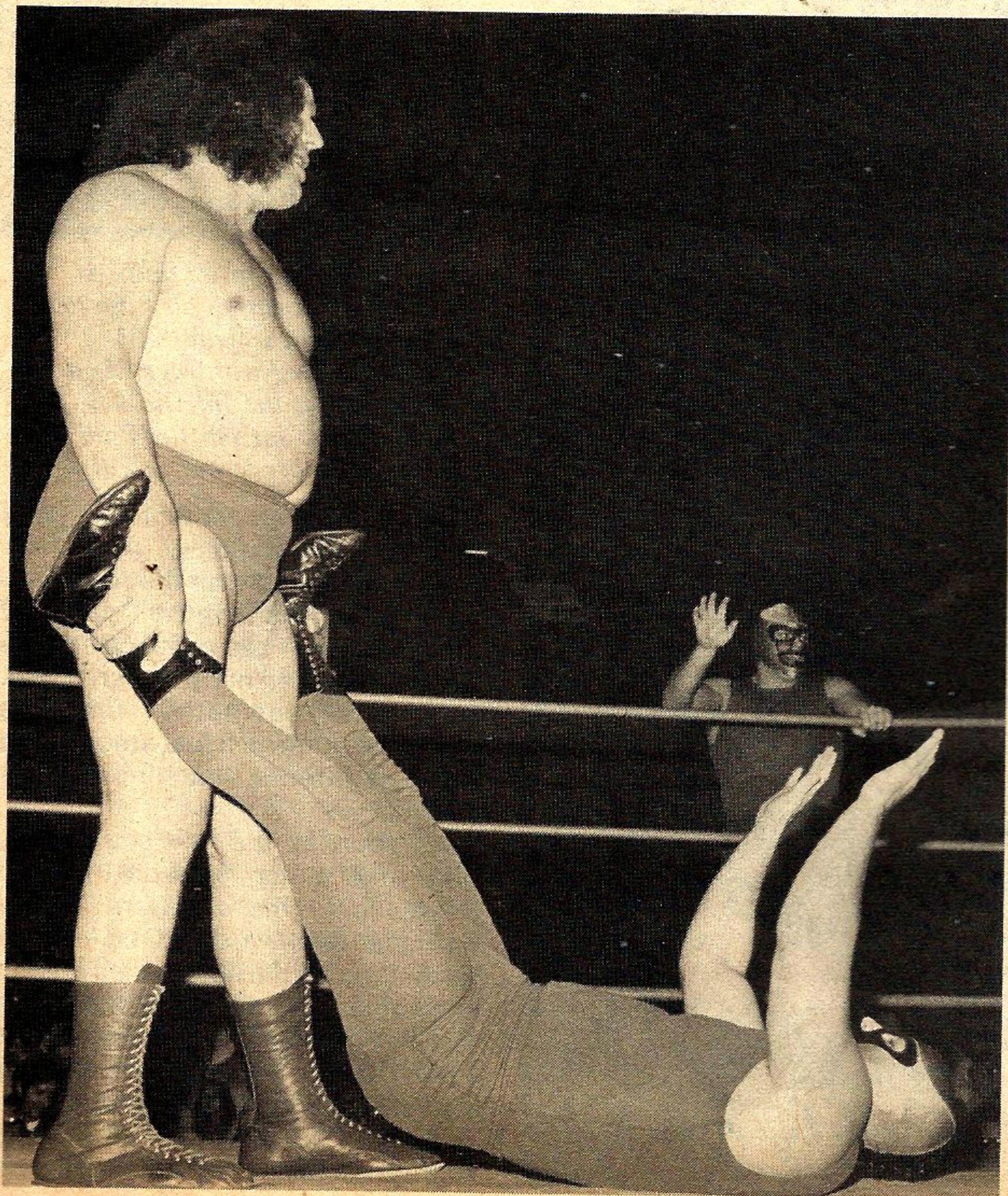
the taste of death.

The past few months had been times of inner torture for Andre the Giant. He would take on more opponents than would seem humanly possible, all in one match! And he

would take as many as five matches a week, more than any other wrestler!

Andre paid a heavy toll for his super-human activity. Many of his closest friends noticed a marked

THE GIANT'S T OF TERROR



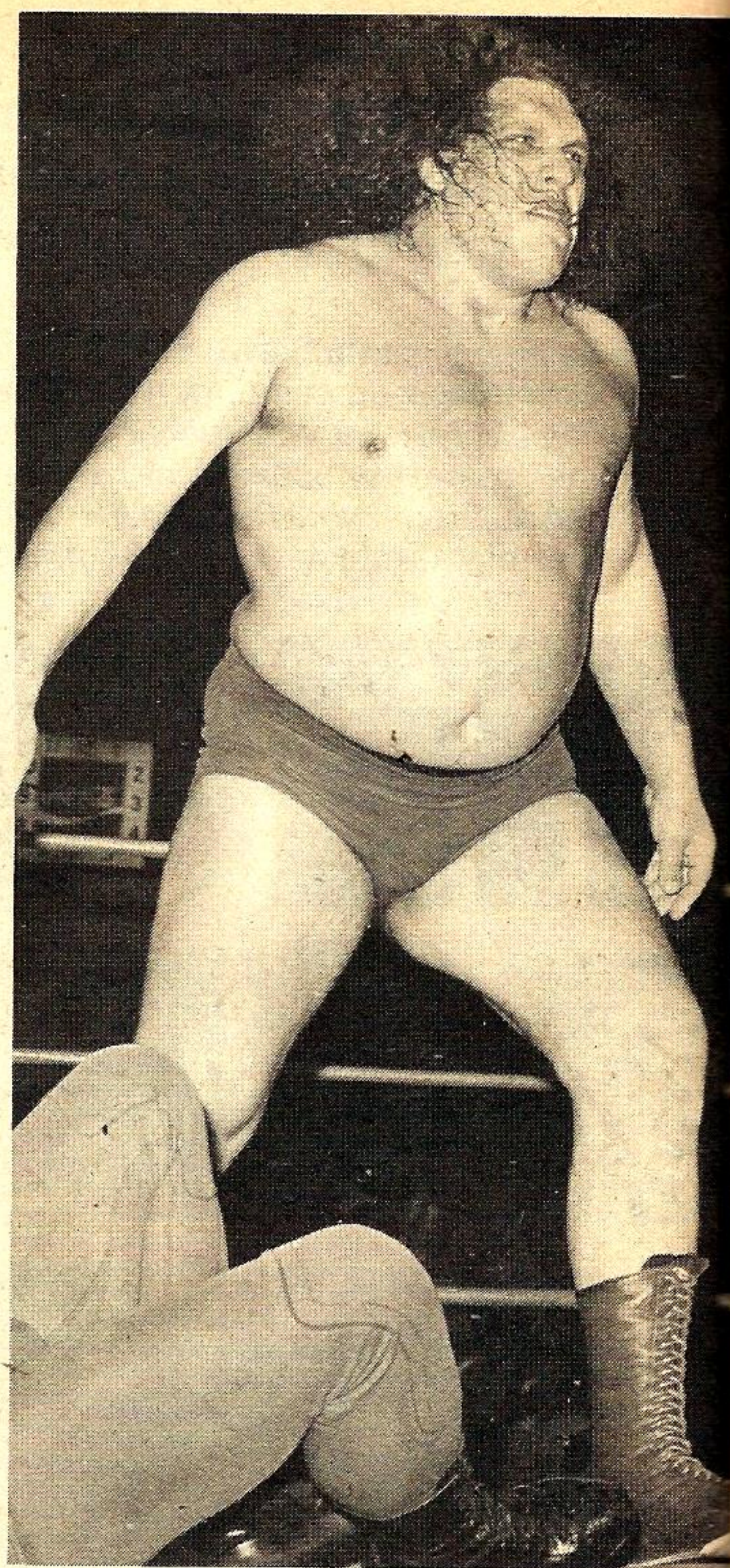
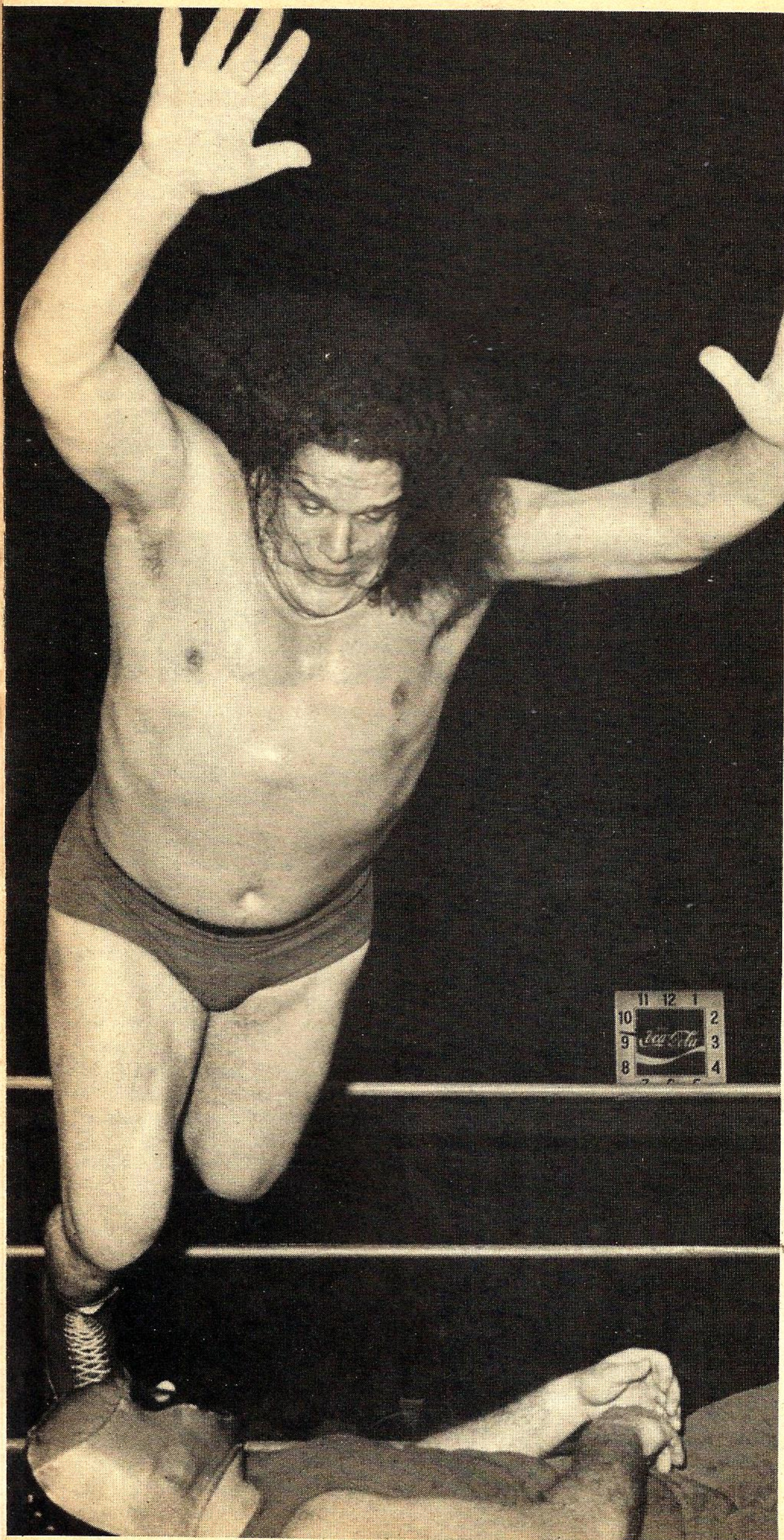
Andre has Inferno I helpless. Inferno I begs his partner for help, who is busy searching for the promised aid of Ernie Ladd!

change in his behavior. One associate even felt Andre may have reached the breaking point—that the man was no longer in control of his behavior.

The cheers of thousands of fans still rang loudly in Andre's ears as he thought back to the horrifying match that evening. He had been scheduled to wrestle Inferno I. When he signed for the match, he never even dreamed he would also encounter the full force of Inferno II plus the driving power of Ernie Ladd. He hadn't bargained for that at all.

As the French Goliath entered the arena he felt confident he could easily defeat Inferno I, in spite of his opponent's record of employing illegal tactics when losing. As he walked down the aisle toward the ring, several women started chanting, "We love Andre." Andre knew he had succeeded in becoming popular among fans.

When Inferno I entered the arena, most of the fans started booing. However, the entrance of his partner, Inferno II, caused an even louder stir. Before the night was



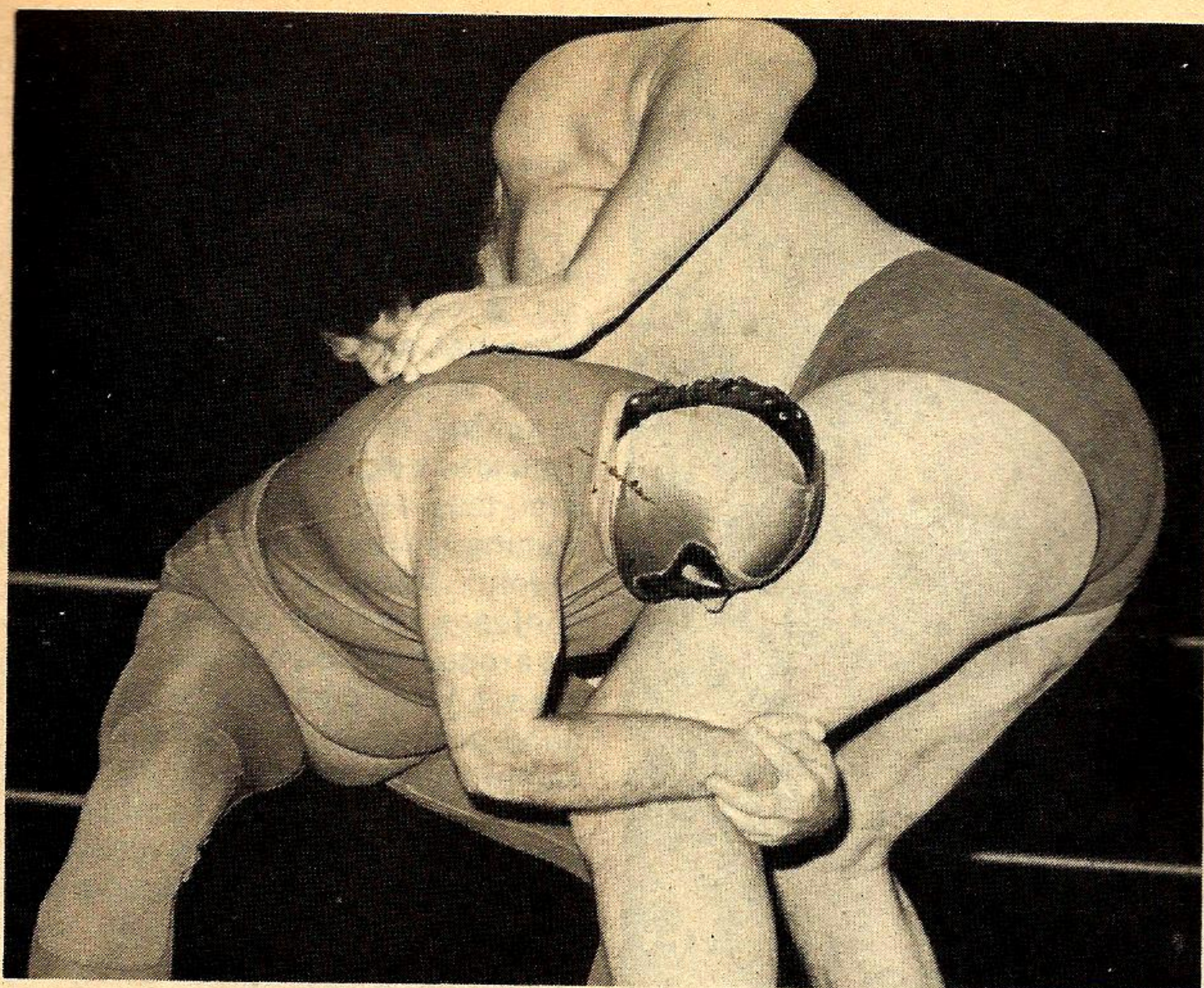
Andre uses his entire body as a weapon, crushing his opponent with his great weight (left). Then, snarling with rage, Andre charges after the Inferno who had come to his partner's aid (above); Andre is out to kill!

over, the fans would have good reason to boo the pair.

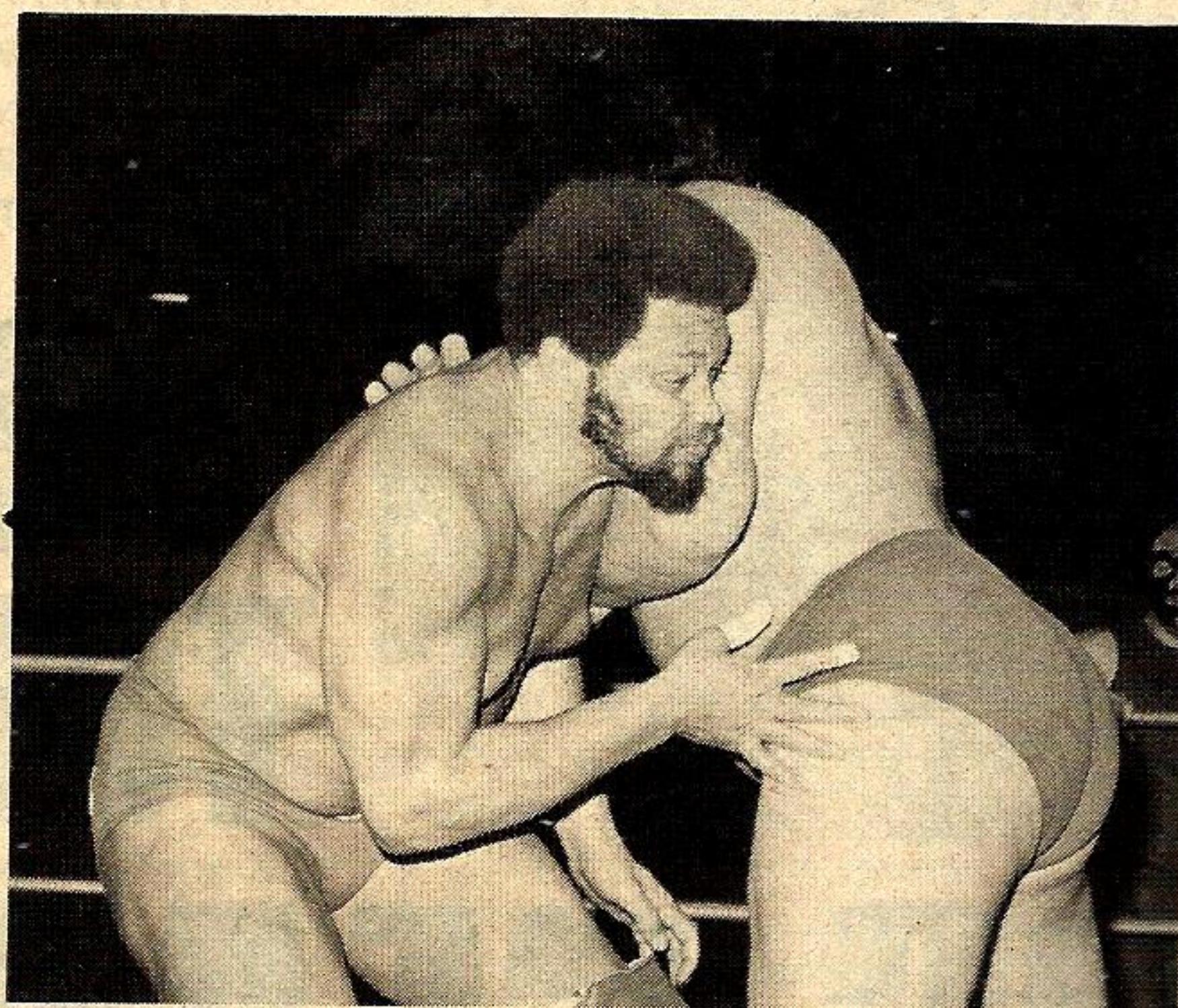
Andre climbed over the ropes and onto the canvas. Inferno I hesitated for a second at the ropes, then was helped over by his partner. Then, instead of retreating into the audience, Inferno II just stood at the ringpost, intently watching Andre's every move.

As soon as the bell sounded to begin the match, Inferno I rushed headlong at his opponent. Andre stumbled backward, but did not lose his balance. Inferno I backed off and tried again, this time putting his full force behind the move. Andre reeled backward and landed in a sitting position on the canvas.

Pleased he could bring down the huge wrestler, Inferno I became



Above: Inferno I rushes at Andre, hoping to tackle the giant to the canvas. Andre absorbs the blow and remains on his feet. Inferno I is stunned by his failure! Right: Ernie Ladd and Andre crash in the middle of the mat battlefield. Even Ernie's football experience could not be effective in flooring Andre.



overconfident. He grabbed Andre's neck with his arm and began to choke him. But Andre is not a man to take things sitting down. He leaped to his feet, Inferno I's arm still around his neck. Then he clutched Inferno's body in his massive arms. Inferno I dropped his grip on the big wrestler.

Then Andre decided to teach his masked opponent a lesson. Employing a rarely used body squeeze, Andre nearly suffocated Inferno I with an increasingly tight grip. When satisfied his opponent was dazed, Andre lifted Inferno I over his head, then slammed the masked wrestler to the mat. Nearly unconscious, Inferno I gave a special secret signal to his partner. Within seconds, Inferno II was

climbing over the ropes.

Inferno II perched himself on the top rope, then pounced on Andre, sending both wrestlers tumbling to the canvas. The masked grappler was able to leap back to his feet before Andre could regain his bearings.

At this point, the referee was about to step in and halt the match for outside interference, but Andre motioned to him his desire to finish off his second opponent. For some unknown reason, the referee let Andre continue. It would have been better for all concerned if Andre had stopped and been satisfied with his victory over Inferno I.

Inferno II looked down at the fallen giant and shook his head. Then, with an intense fury, the

masked wrestler started pummeling Andre's body with hard punches. Inferno II knew this maneuver would not distract Andre from exacting revenge for very long, but he could stall for enough time for his partner to regain his senses.

Just as Andre was beginning to climb to his feet, Inferno I rushed at the giant wrestler, bringing him back to the canvas. Then both Infernos began a vicious assault on Andre, trying to render him helpless.

Andre called upon his almost unlimited reserves of strength to overcome the attack. He grabbed Inferno I's right hand and Inferno II's left hand. Rising to his full height, he took the two opponents and simultaneously flipped them to the canvas. Just then a loud noise was heard from the back of the arena. The audience gasped as it saw Ernie Ladd rush to the ring to assist the two Infernos.

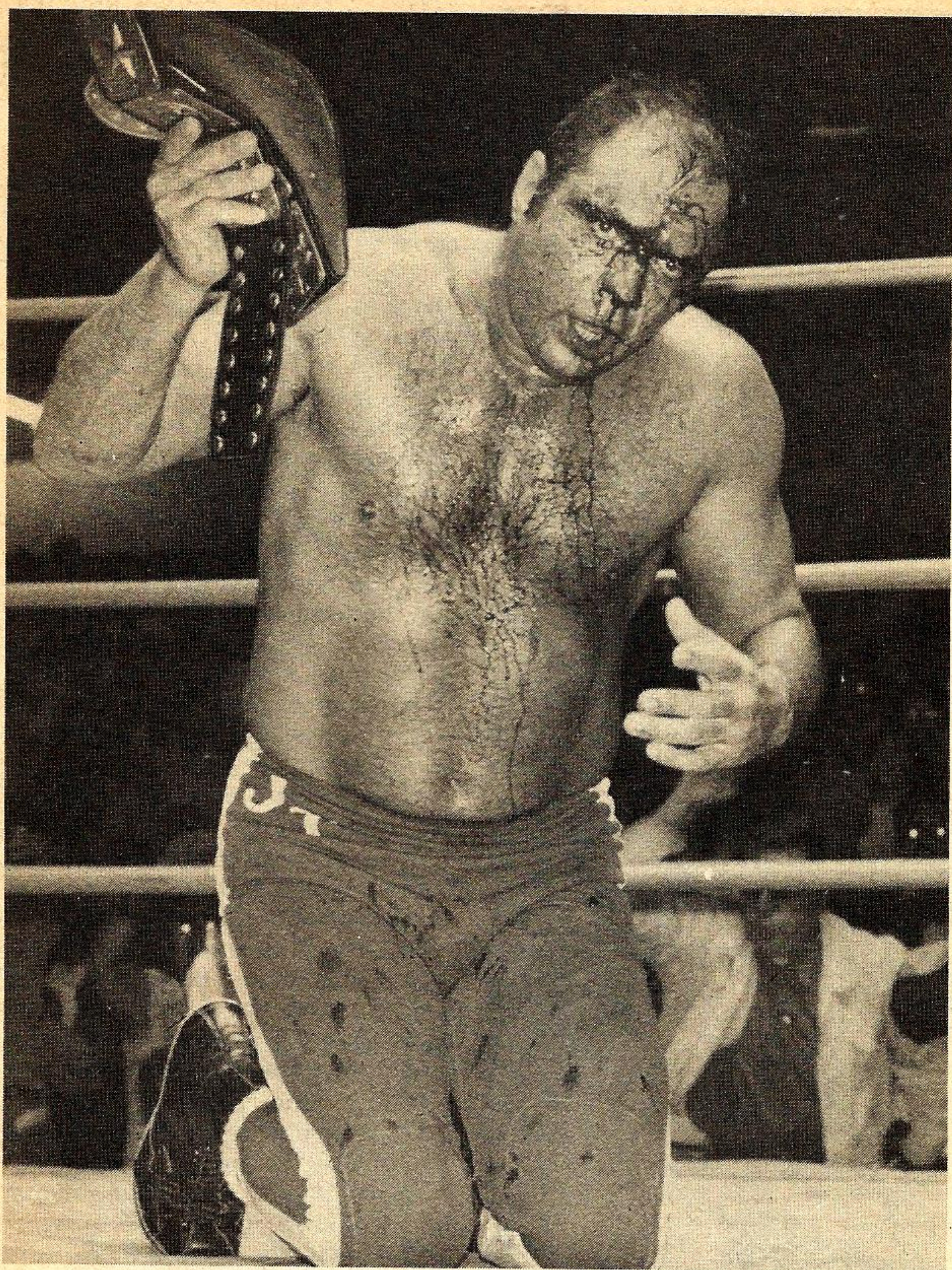
Even Andre was taken aback by the entrance of Ladd. The two Infernos scrambled to their feet and, together with Ladd, started the most brutal attack of all on Andre.

The three wrestlers rushed the giant grappler and forced him to the mat. Each Inferno grabbed one leg. Ladd grabbed Andre's head. The three men carried the helpless Andre to the ropes. Then they turned him upside down and started slamming his head against the concrete floor. After five slams, Andre passed out.

The referee stepped in and stopped the match, warning Ladd and both Infernos about their tactics and threatening to bring charges against them with the wrestling commission. Three doctors rushed to Andre's side, trying to revive the giant wrestler. Only after almost 10 minutes of effort were the physicians able to restore Andre to consciousness.

Andre quickly dressed and left the arena. He walked around aimlessly for a while until he happened upon a deserted park. He sat there quietly for a while, reflecting on what had just happened to him. His close brush with death had totally unnerved him.

It was then when Andre reaffirmed his resolution to become the greatest wrestler of all time. But he also learned there is a point where it is necessary to stop. He learned a human can only do so much. □



Bloody and battered, a still proud John Tolos weakly waves his title belt in the air. To keep his honors, Tolos risks his career time and time again!

“WRESTLE TO WIN, no matter what the cost,” John Tolos has said on many occasions. “But there is something really beautiful in hearing the cheers of thousands of adoring fans. I cannot describe it—it’s just this feeling coming from within.”

John Tolos is a wrestler who confuses the fans—when they go to an arena, they do not know what to expect. Will Tolos be a bad guy or a good guy tonight? Will he grapple scientifically, or will he again resort to the dirty tactics he has become famous for? The fans never know. Sometimes, John Tolos doesn’t know either.

“There is nothing more thrilling than having your hand raised in victory after a match,” said John. “I’ve always wanted to win. If I sometimes have to resort to extraordinary means to achieve my goal, so what?”

JOHN TOLOS’

FRANTIC SEARCH FOR PEACE

John Tolos is the most unpredictable man in professional wrestling today. He had befriended and betrayed more men than most people ever meet! What is it Tolos is striving towards—and running away from?

"When I was teaming with my brother Chris, there was no question we would always win, no matter what. We worked well together. We achieved heights no other tag team ever reached. And yes, we did have to resort to some extreme measures in order to win. But at that time, all that mattered was winning.

"When we split up, I had a rough time. I even tried to leave wrestling for a while. I got a job with a big corporation and did the commuter, 9 to 5 routine. It was hell, I just couldn't stand it. I had to go back to wrestling before I went crazy.

"When I returned, things were different. First of all, I still was not used to wrestling as a single, so I had that adjustment to make. Then, by fate I guess, I was pitted against some of the most vicious men who ever grappled. That was when things started changing for me. For years I heard fans booing me whenever I entered an arena. It wasn't pleasant, but it is something I grew used to. All of a sudden, everything changed. Fans would cheer me when I came into the ring. And you know something, it felt really nice.

"When I was matched against Greg Valentine, I experienced a very strange feeling. My opponent was booed. I was hearing cheers. I felt, for some inexplicable reason, I could not resort to extreme tactics to win the match. I didn't want to disappoint the thousands of people who cheered for me.

"And that night was when my problems began."

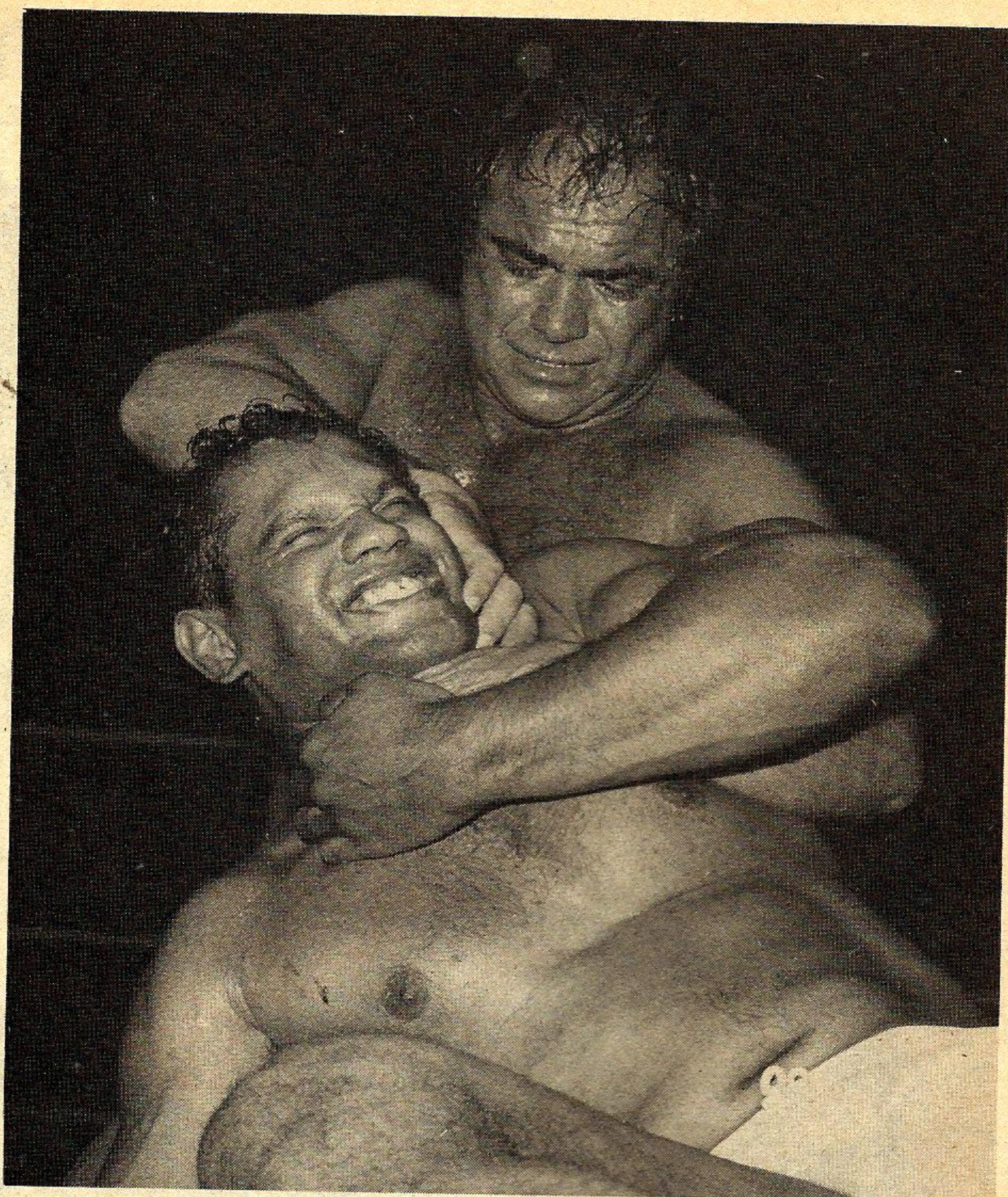
The "problems" John refers to is his changing from a fan favorite to a wrestler who must resort to "extreme tactics."

After his match with Greg Valentine, an inner conflict arose in John Tolos. On one hand, he needed to win, a desire dating back to his childhood days. While growing up he was always pitted against older brother Chris. Even when they started wrestling professionally, a rivalry still existed and eventually caused an irreparable rift between the two. On the other hand, John needed approval—something coming only from hearing the fans cheer for him.

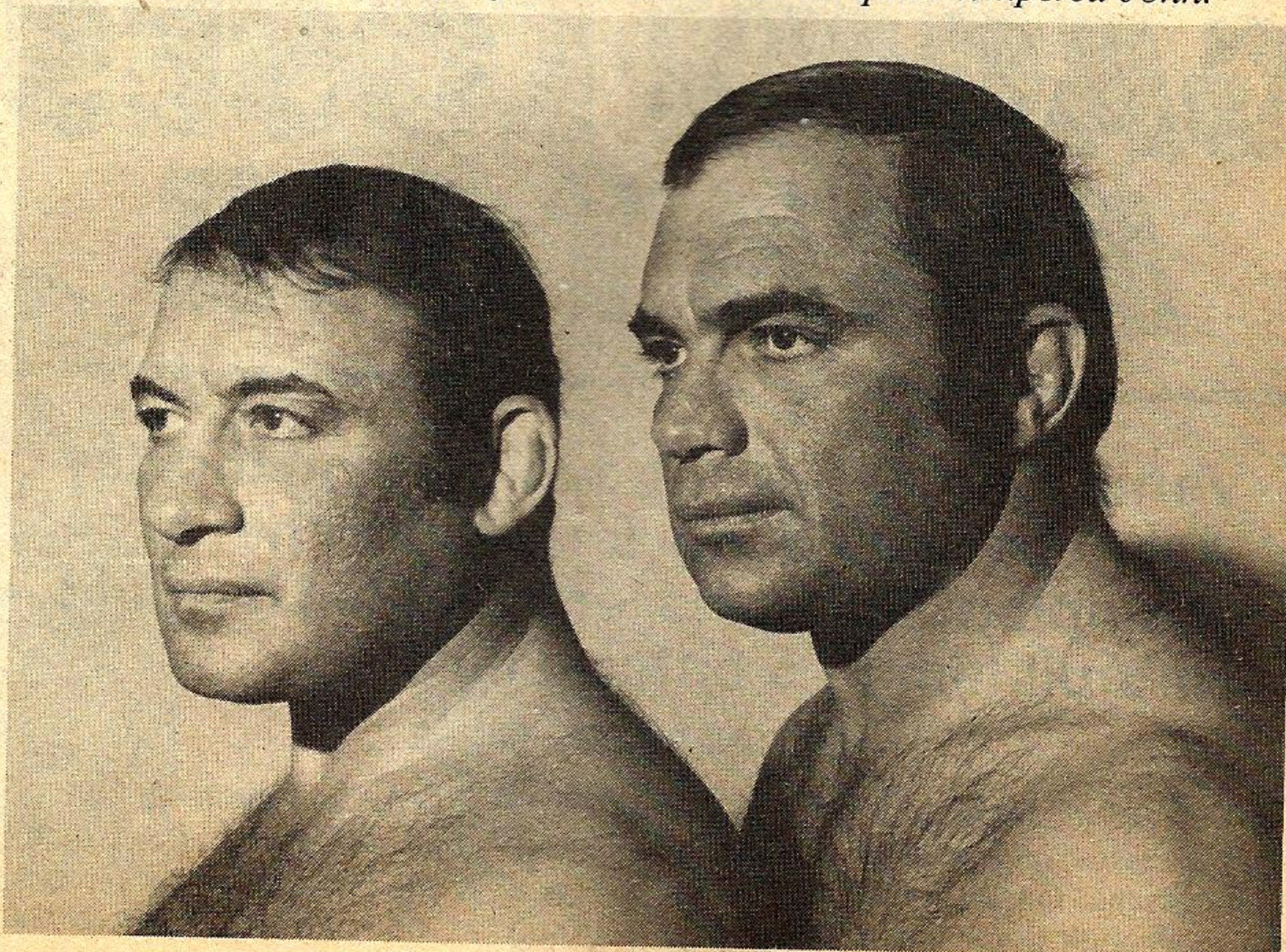
And this inner conflict must be resolved.

In psychology, there exists a theory stating a person is really

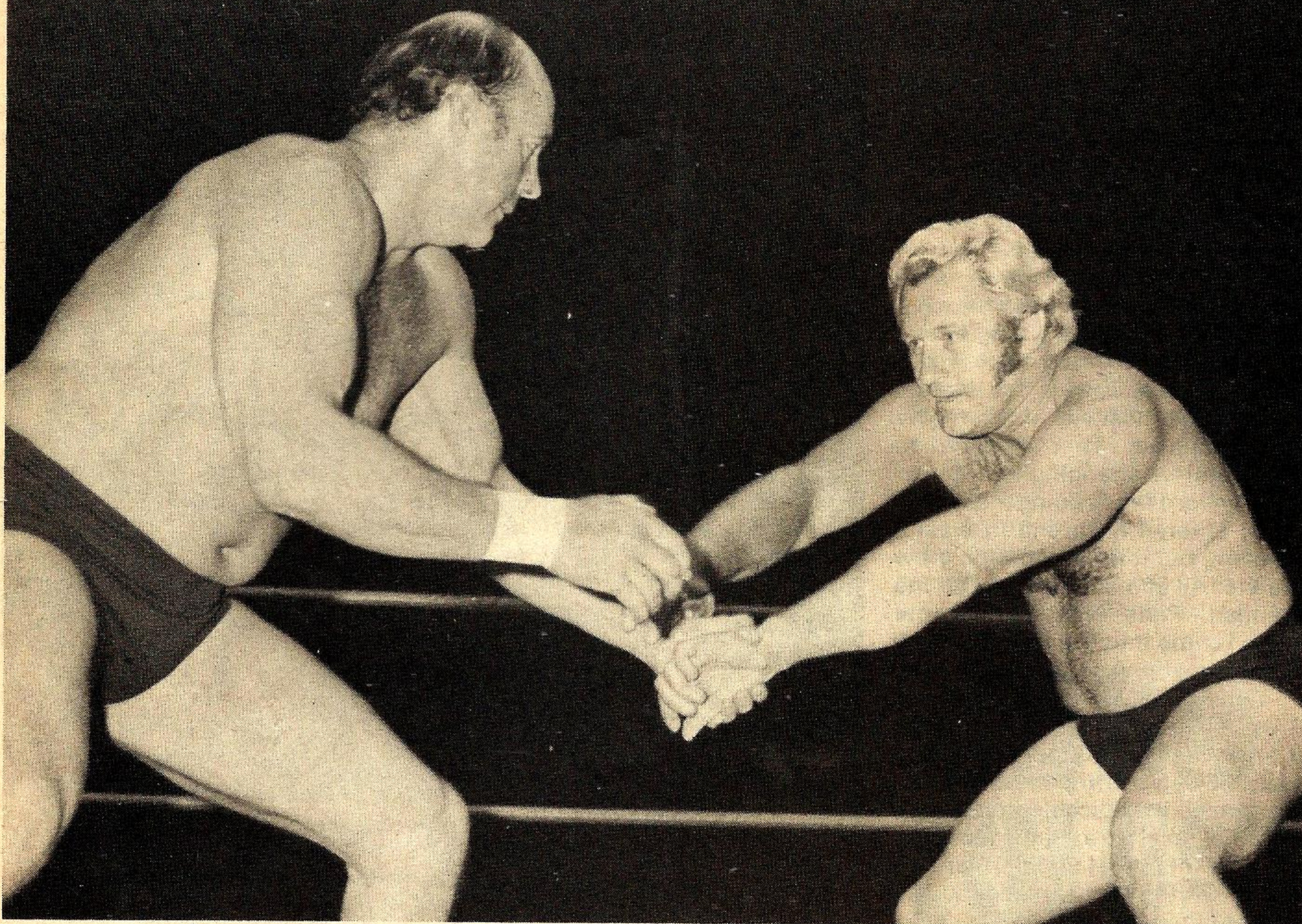
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Above: Tolos ruthlessly chokes his bitter enemy, Victor Rivera, during one of their many matches. The two men wrestled each other in every conceivable kind of bout, never tiring of torturing each other. It is a wonder both men survived these matches, classics in sheer savagery. Below: John poses with his brother, Chris. The two used to be a tag team. When they split, people realized how great a restraining influence Chris was on quick-tempered John.



SHOCKING UPSET:



GAGNE LOSES AWA TITLE

Verne Gagne often thought about the day when he would no longer be the AWA champion. But he never expected it would embroil him in a bitter feud!

PHOTOS BY BOB SABRE

IT WAS A nightmare come true. The fates had conspired against him, Verne Gagne thought, as he watched Nick Bockwinkel walk away

with the AWA championship belt.

Verne was still groggy from being slugged from behind. His legs were wobbly as he stumbled back to the

dressing room. The pain was too great for him to remark on the strange sensation of walking back without the championship belt around his waist, a belt he had worn proudly for years.

As he collapsed onto the training table, Verne began to reconstruct the tragic events of the evening. He had pinned Bockwinkel to the canvas and assumed the third and final fall was over. The next thing he knew, an explosion erupted in his brain. As he lay back, his son, Greg, told him what had transpired.

When Verne released Bockwinkel, he was slugged from behind by Bobby Duncum, Nick's manager for the evening. The substitute referee and friend of Bockwinkel, Paul Perschmann, then declared Bockwinkel's leg had been draped on the rope during the pin, nullifying the victory. Verne, unconscious, never even heard the referee's command to continue

(Continued on page 50)

BY OX BAKER

I DESERVE THE credit and the AWA title! I earned it and I want it! Now I'm going to tell the world why it's mine.

As everyone knows by now, Nick Bockwinkle recently won the AWA championship from Verne Gagne. I could fill a book with all the miserable

things Gagne's done—and I'd still have to leave most of it out. Anyway, Bockwinkle beat the clown and now he's champion.

A week before Bockwinkle beat Gagne, I also beat Gagne. When I finished with him, he was too weak to walk. I finished him but good! He'll never be able to wrestle well again after what I did to him. I wrecked him for life!

Did I get the belt for being so great? Is there justice in this world? The answer to both questions is "NO!"

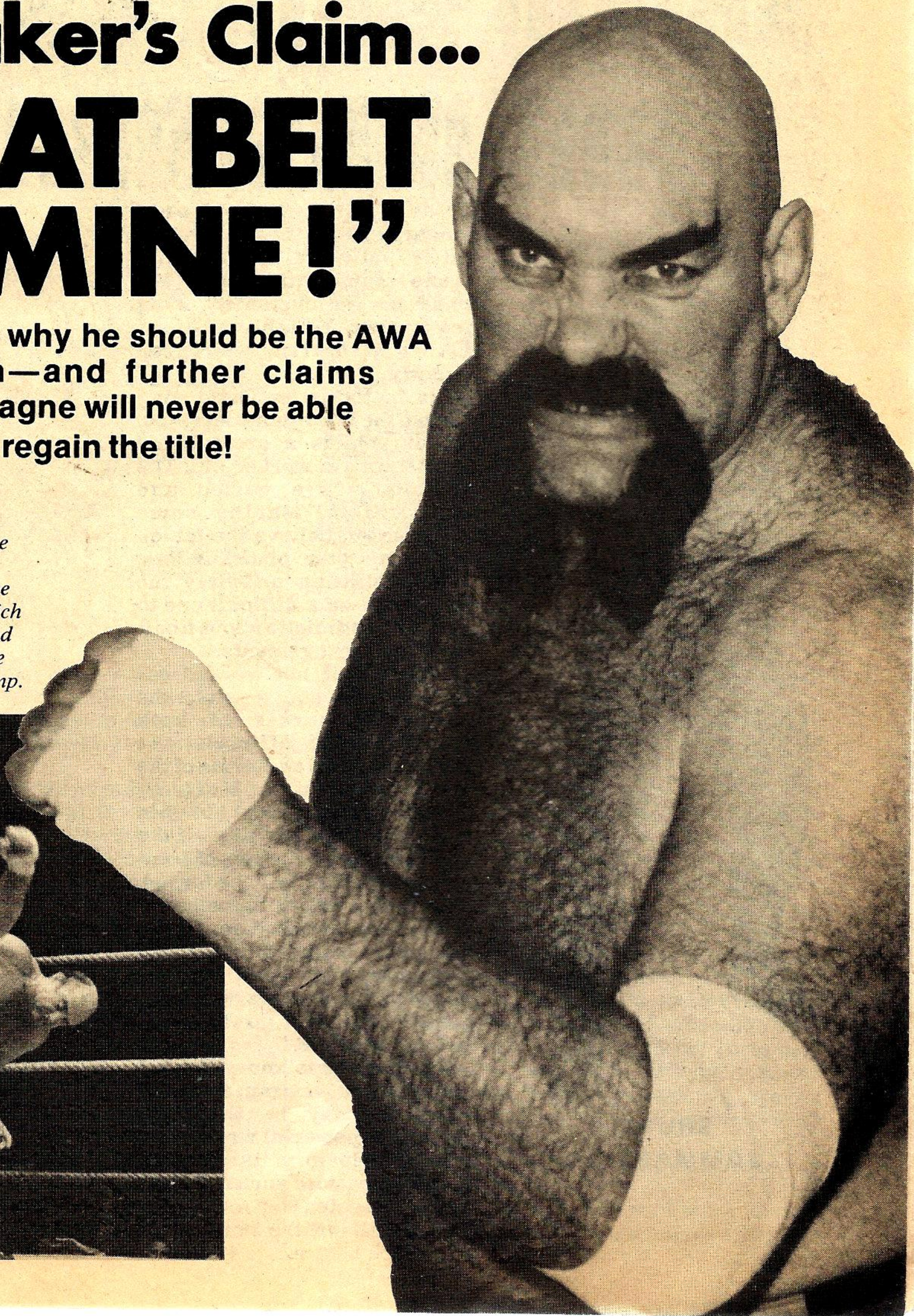
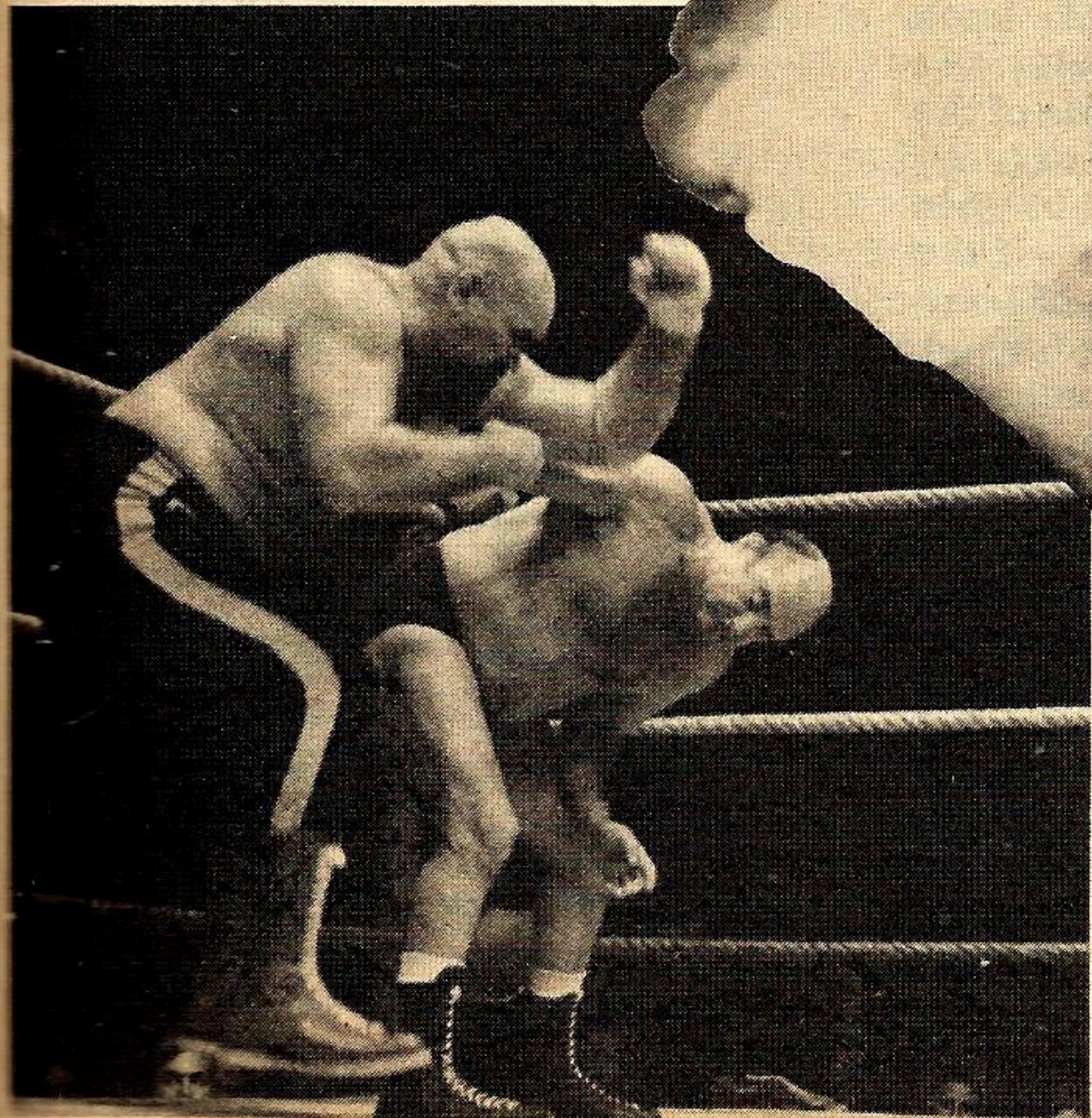
As everyone knows, there are only three referees in the entire AWA not on Gagne's payroll. Since he's no longer champion, many of these guys will have to start earning a living. Bockwinkle doesn't need stooges.

In my bout, Gagne's stooge, the
(Continued on page 51)

Ox Baker's Claim... "THAT BELT IS MINE!"

Ox Baker tells why he should be the AWA champion—and further claims Verne Gagne will never be able to regain the title!

Ox Baker (right) is claiming he won the AWA title in his match against Verne Gagne (below), which weakened Verne and allowed Bockwinkle to become the champ.

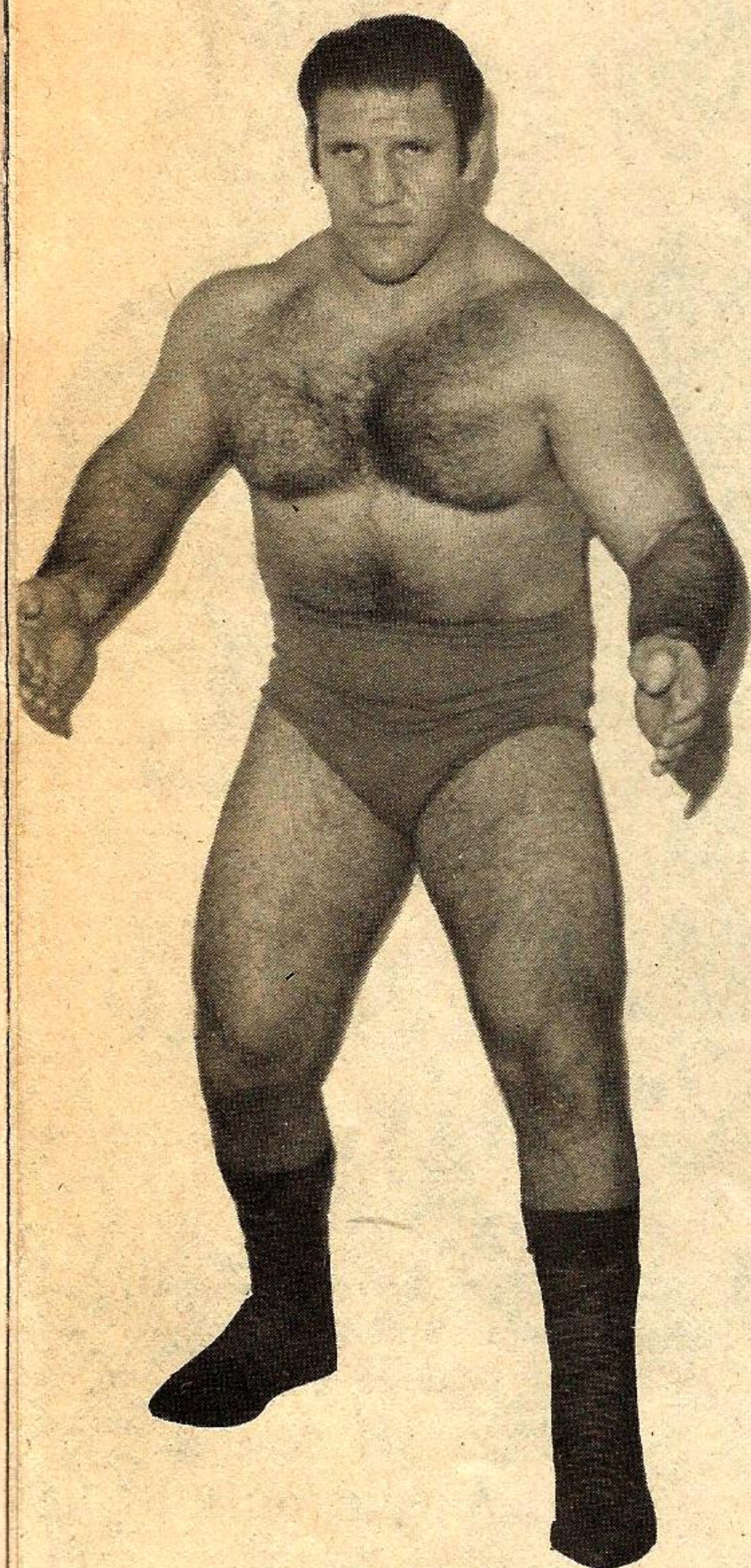


★ THE BATTLE OF THE CENTURY ★

BRUNO SAMMARTINO

VS.

MIL MASCARAS



**BRUNO
SAMMARTINO**

New York, New York, January 13—A championship battle between WWWF king Bruno Sammartino and Mil Mascaras is currently being negotiated, reliable sources within wrestling revealed recently.

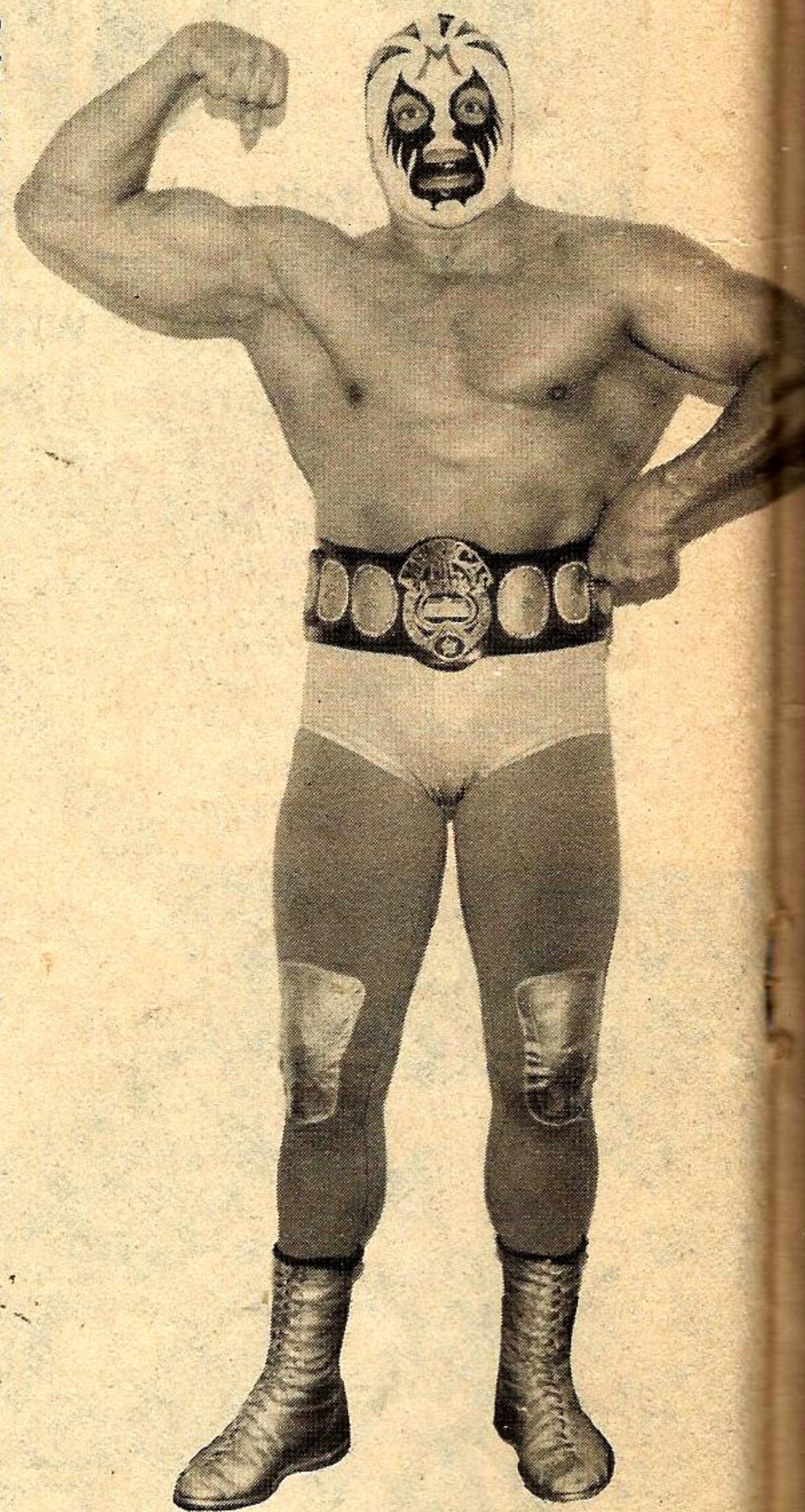
The match is far from being signed, the informants stressed. There remains a great many details not yet worked out. The roadblocks are varied and considerable, leading some observers to believe the match will never take place. Others, while admitting privately the match will be a difficult one to sign, are optimistic about finalizing the arrangements.

Details still not worked out include the bout's site, the respective purses of both grapplers, the officials, the number of falls, and terms of the rematch clause. Neither wrestler will yield to his prospective foe's wishes. If the bout is to occur, a series of compromises will have to be forged.

Neither wrestler has met the other in professional combat in the past. Against common opponents they hold similar records. It appears doubtful either man will go into the match a favorite.

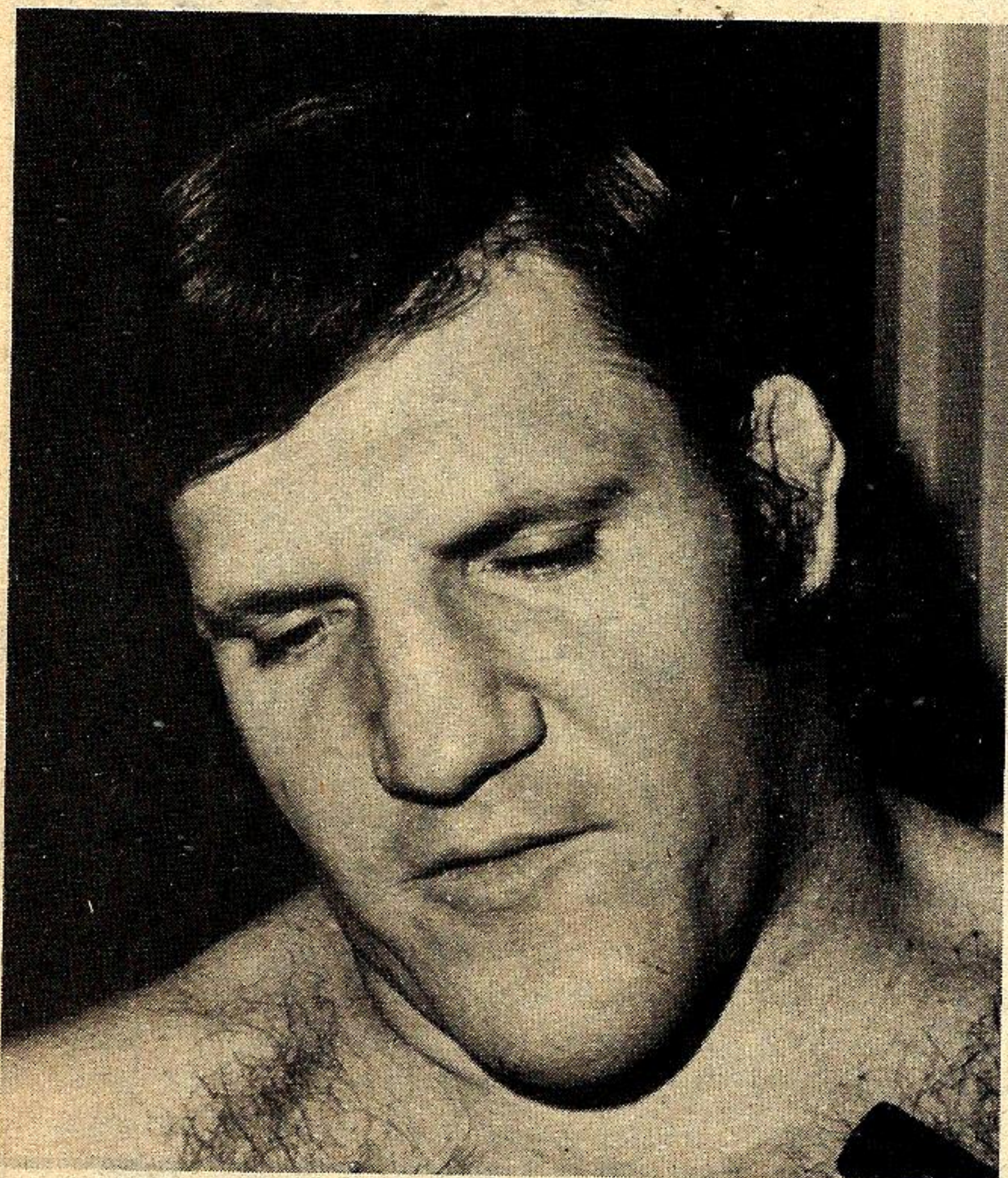
Sammartino is known for his strength and veteran cunning. Mascaras may be the most gracefully powerful wrestler in the sport's history. Rarely have two athletes with such different styles competed.

Most believe the bout won't take place before late 1976. □



**MIL
MASCARAS**

"HOW I'D DEFEAT MIL MASCARAS"



BY BRUNO SAMMARTINO

THOUGH MANY FANS may resent me saying this, I think I can beat Mil Mascaras fairly easily.

I've always believed the wrestler to respect is the man who's balanced on the canvas. His moves are the most effective.

While the aerial tactics are the most spectacular, I think they can be dangerous to the wrestler. If the man on the ground knows what he's doing, he can avoid the moves and render his opponent helpless.

The best flying wrestler I ever saw was Argentina Rocca but he never won a world championship. That's because the guys balanced on the ground, steady and alert, knew what they were doing. He won many matches, but never the top prize.

Aerial tactics are too risky, making the guy who does them very vulnerable. I don't think any wrestler who uses them can survive for long against top competition. Mil has an incredible record of victories for an aerial wrestler; he's great but he's also lucky.

I would be more on my guard for a match against Bobby Duncum, Ivan Koloff, and people like that. I think they're tougher men, more difficult to beat.

I know this might anger many of Mil's fans, but I must be perfectly honest. I admire Mascaras' great skills, but I don't think they would give me much trouble. □

"HOW I'D DEFEAT BRUNO SAMMARTINO"



BY MIL MASCARAS

IHAVE OFTEN wondered how I would wrestle against Bruno Sammartino. After many years of watching him and admiring his ability, I decided I knew exactly what methods would work best against this great wrestler.

Of course, I would have to be in top condition to go against Bruno. I would concentrate my training in order to perfect a dozen maneuvers I would rely on exclusively. They would not be new maneuvers but rather ones I have used in good stead over the years. They may be slightly altered, but there would be nothing new.

What would change are the maneuvers I use to set up my finishing holds. I would have to devise different ways of preparing my opponent for the fall.

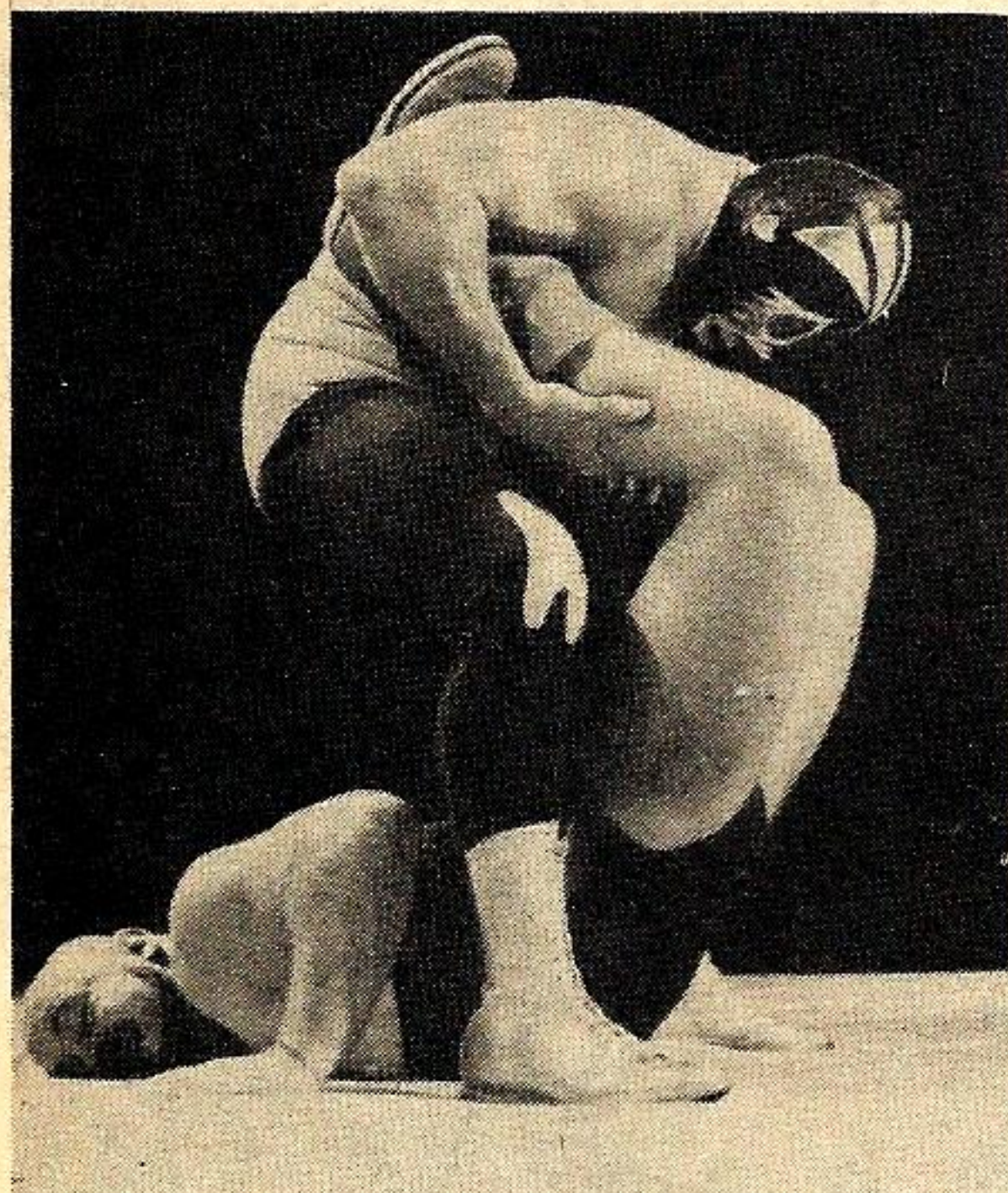
My real advantage is speed. Sammartino is a brawler, ready to slug it out when the going gets rough. He needs an opponent to try to match power with him. He has his worst matches against opponents who are faster than he is. I'll confound him with my flying maneuvers.

Sammartino has to get set to wrestle at his best. He won't get set against me.

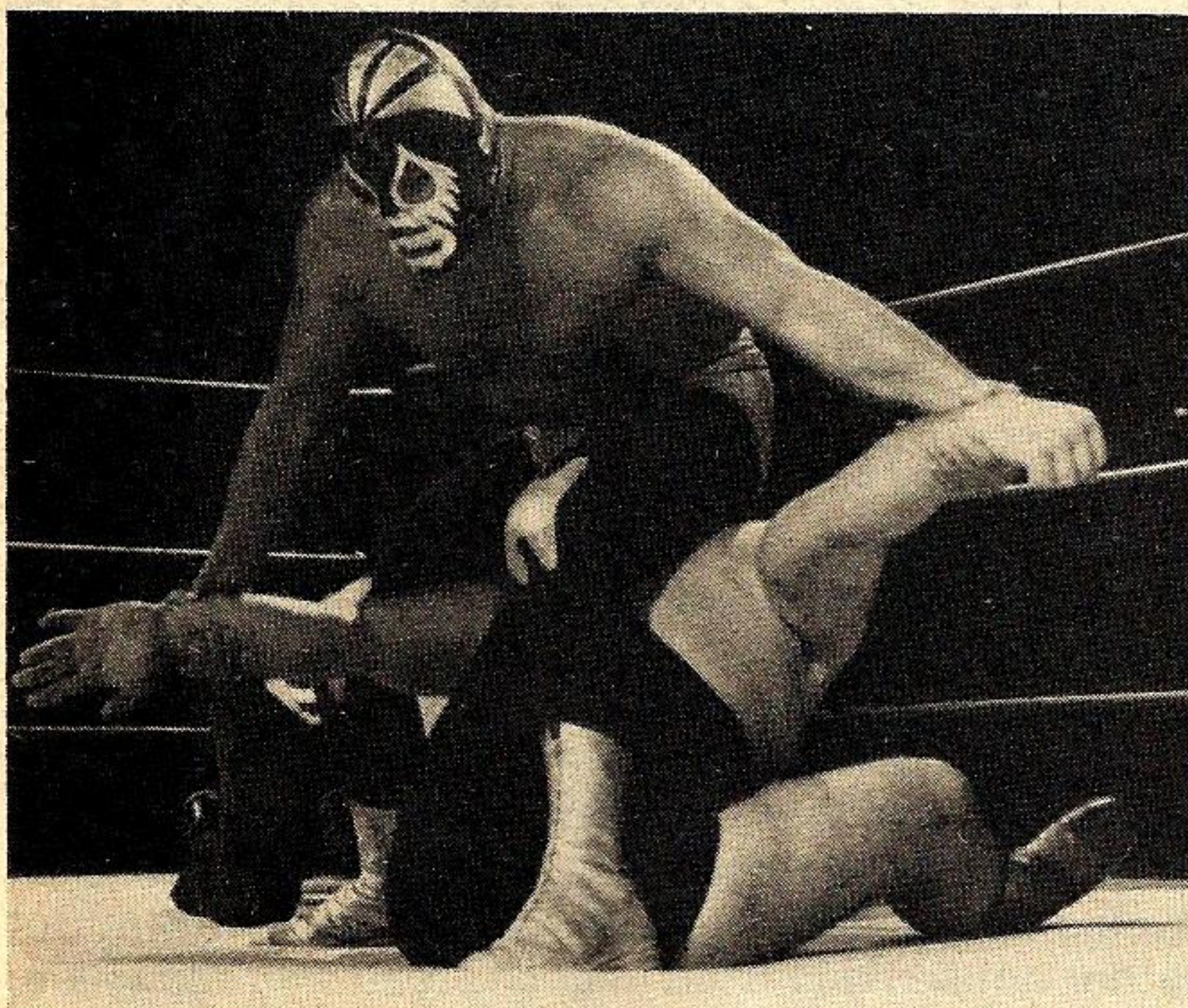
It will be a tough match, one I think will attain the status of a classic. In the end, I believe I'll be the victor. □

COMMON OPPONENTS

IVAN KOLOFF



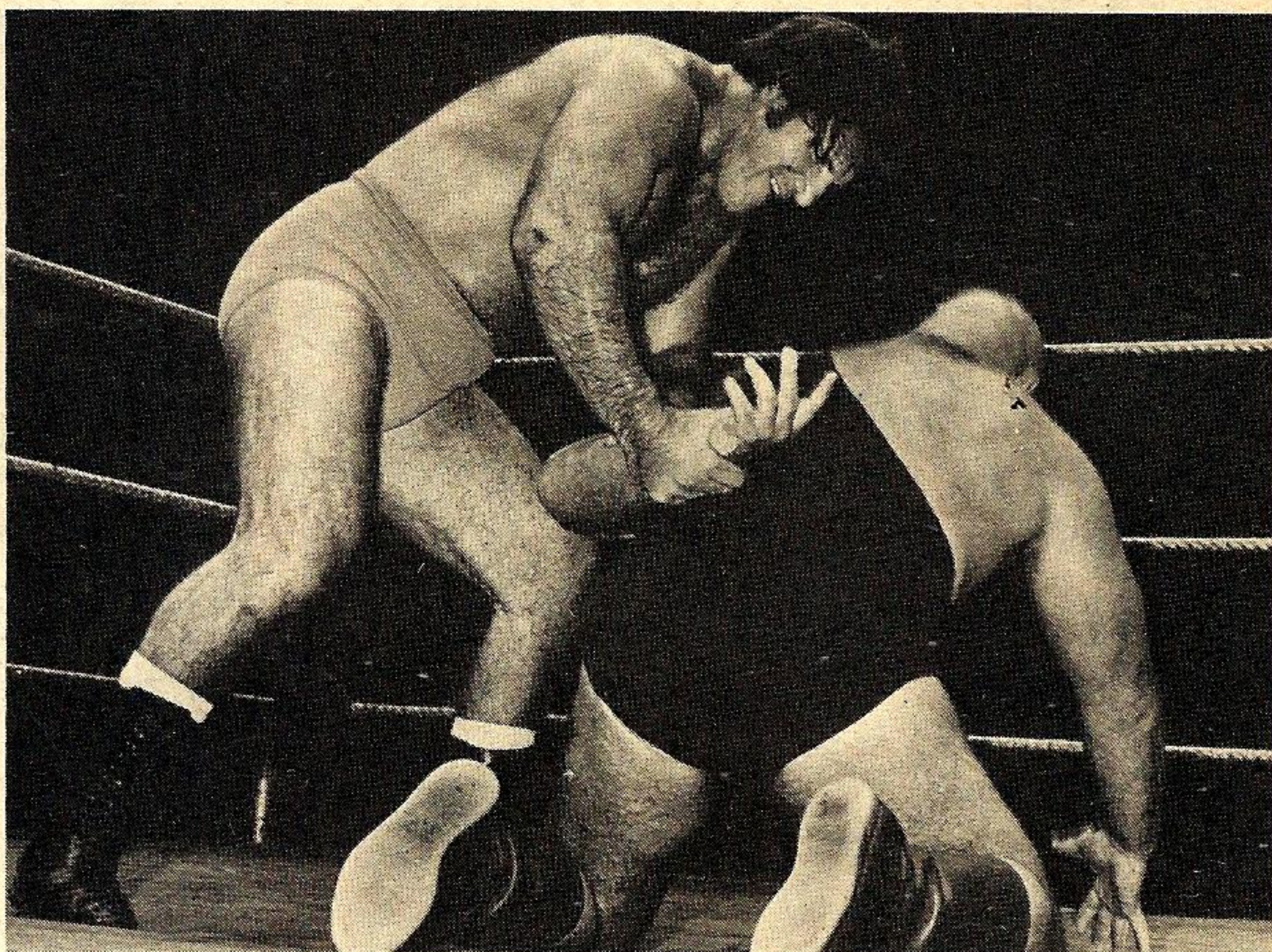
Mascaras executes textbook perfect Boston crab (above) and armstretchers (below) in his tough and inconclusive battles against Ivan Koloff.



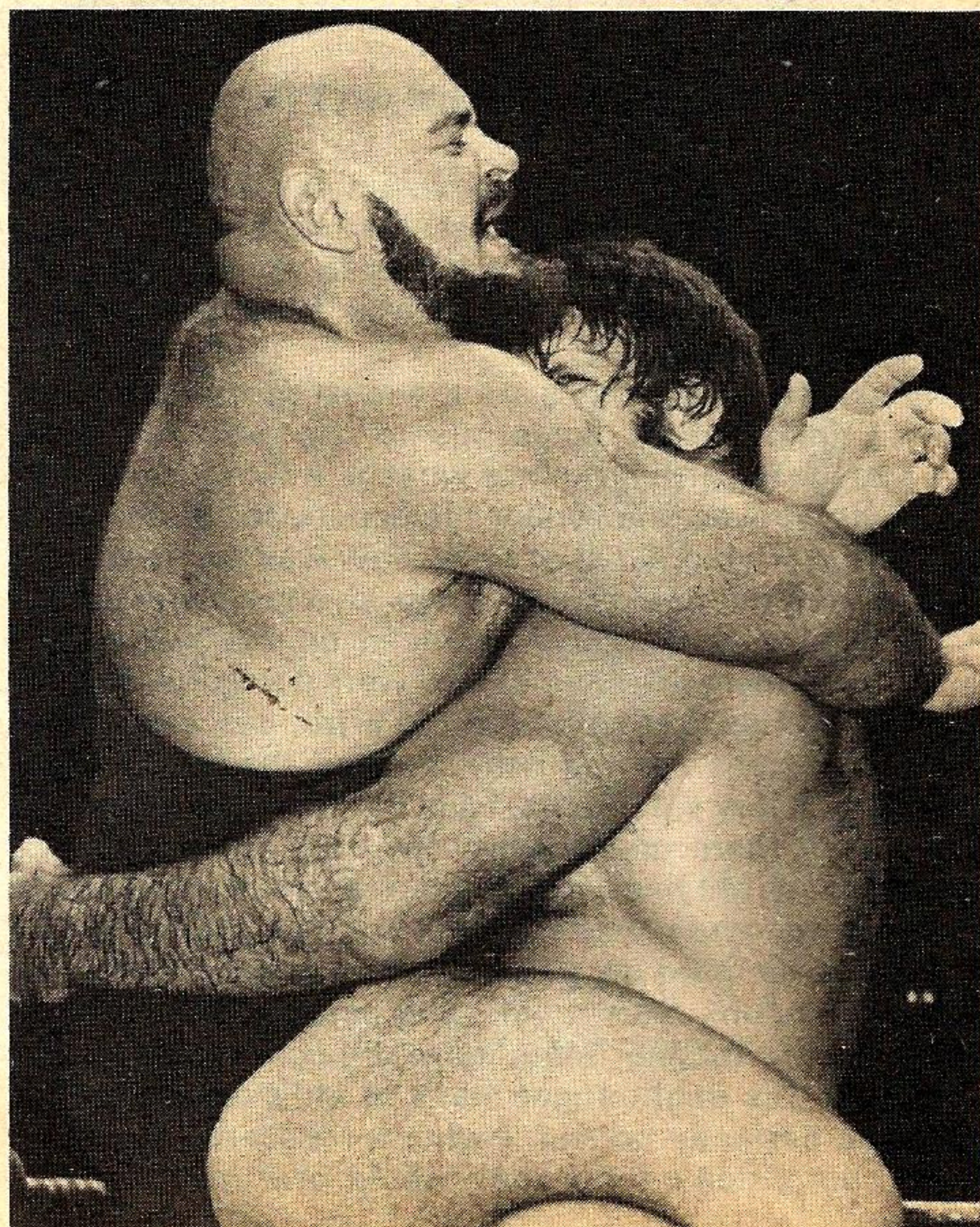
IVAN KOLOFF—Ivan is the man who defeated Bruno for the WWWF title in 1971. They have since engaged in several blistering battles with Bruno emerging victorious most times. Other times Koloff held him to a draw.

Mascaras and Koloff brawled often for the IWA championship. The results were inconclusive. While Mil never lost his professional calm during the match, his frustration was evident. Koloff also could never manage to gain any real dominance during the proceedings.

At times, Koloff seemed confused and overwhelmed by Mascaras' flying tactics. Ivan was often surprised by Sammartino's brute strength in their battles.

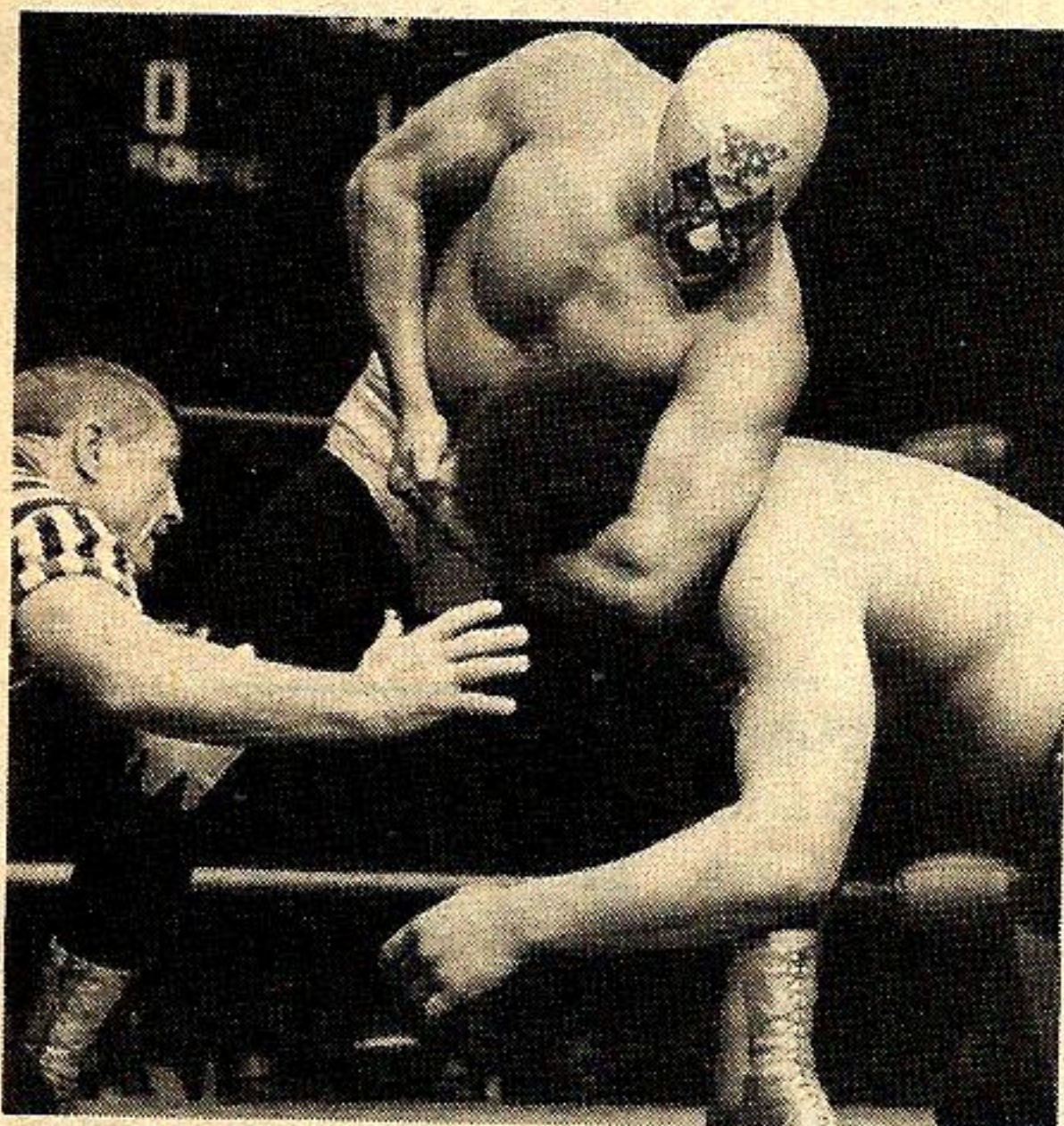


Bruno brings Koloff to his knees with an agonizing and perfectly executed hammerlock (above). It is Bruno's famed bearhug which causes Koloff the most pain (below). It is Bruno's great strength which again and again keeps Koloff from defeating him.

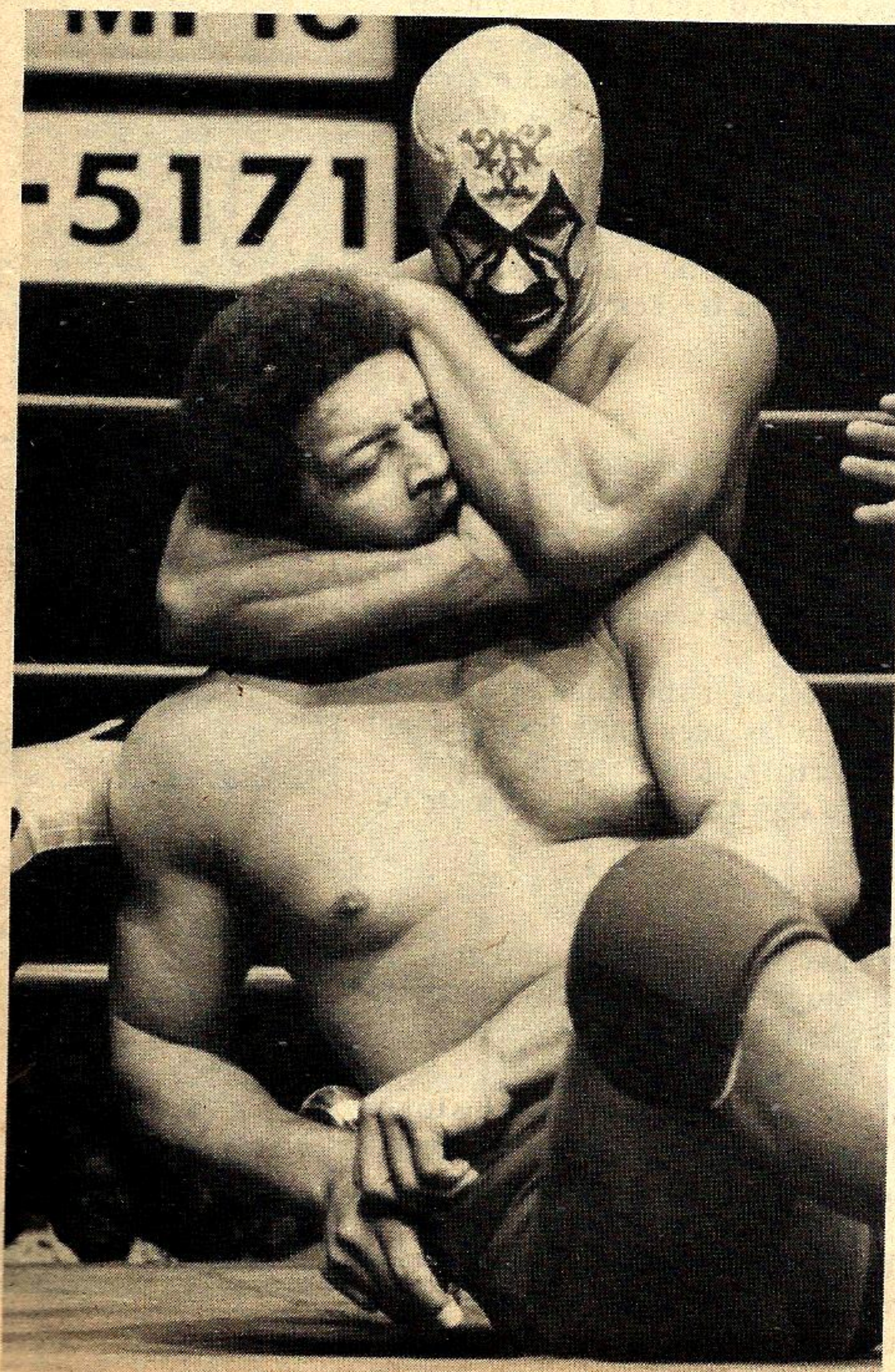
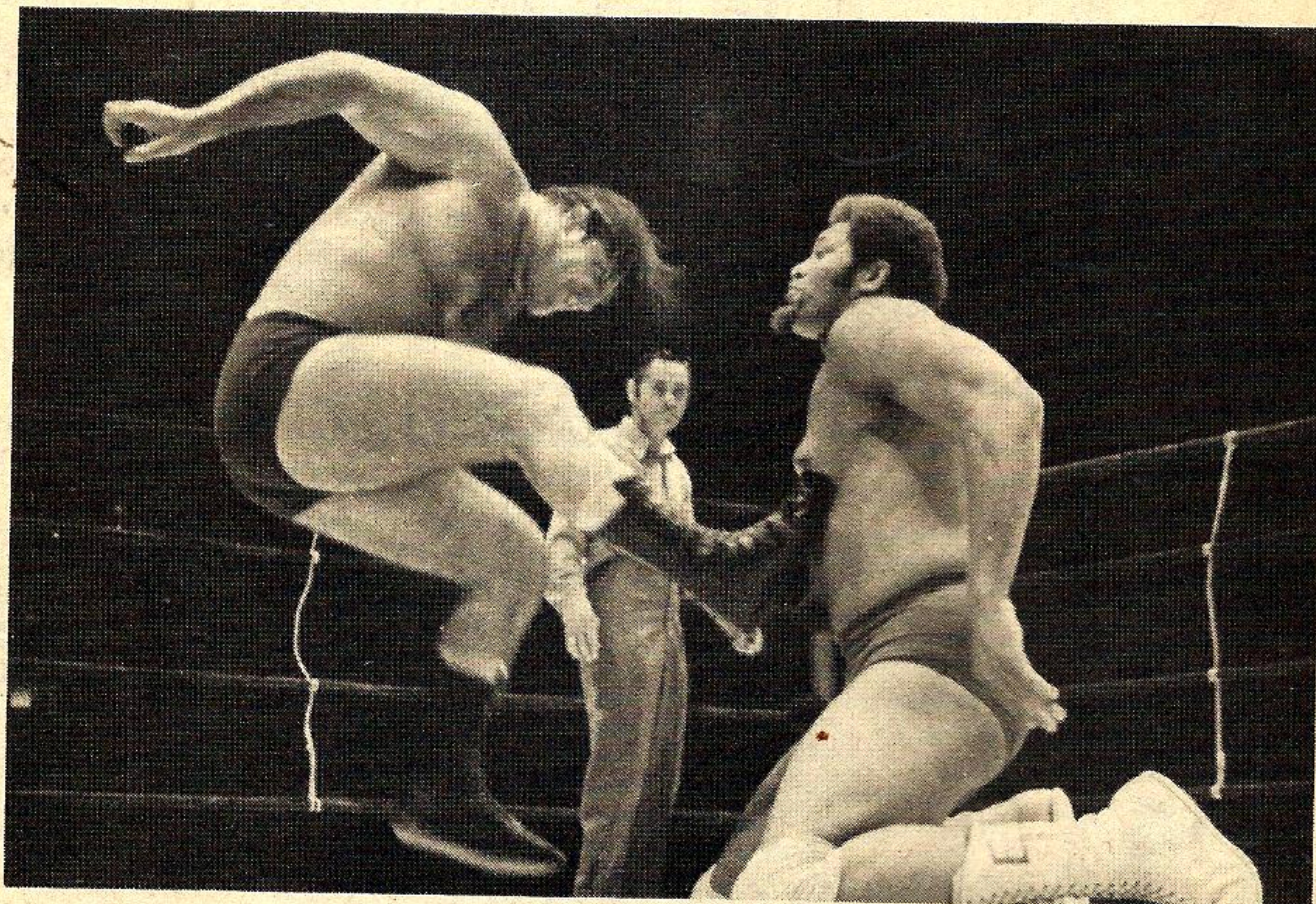


COMMON OPPONENTS

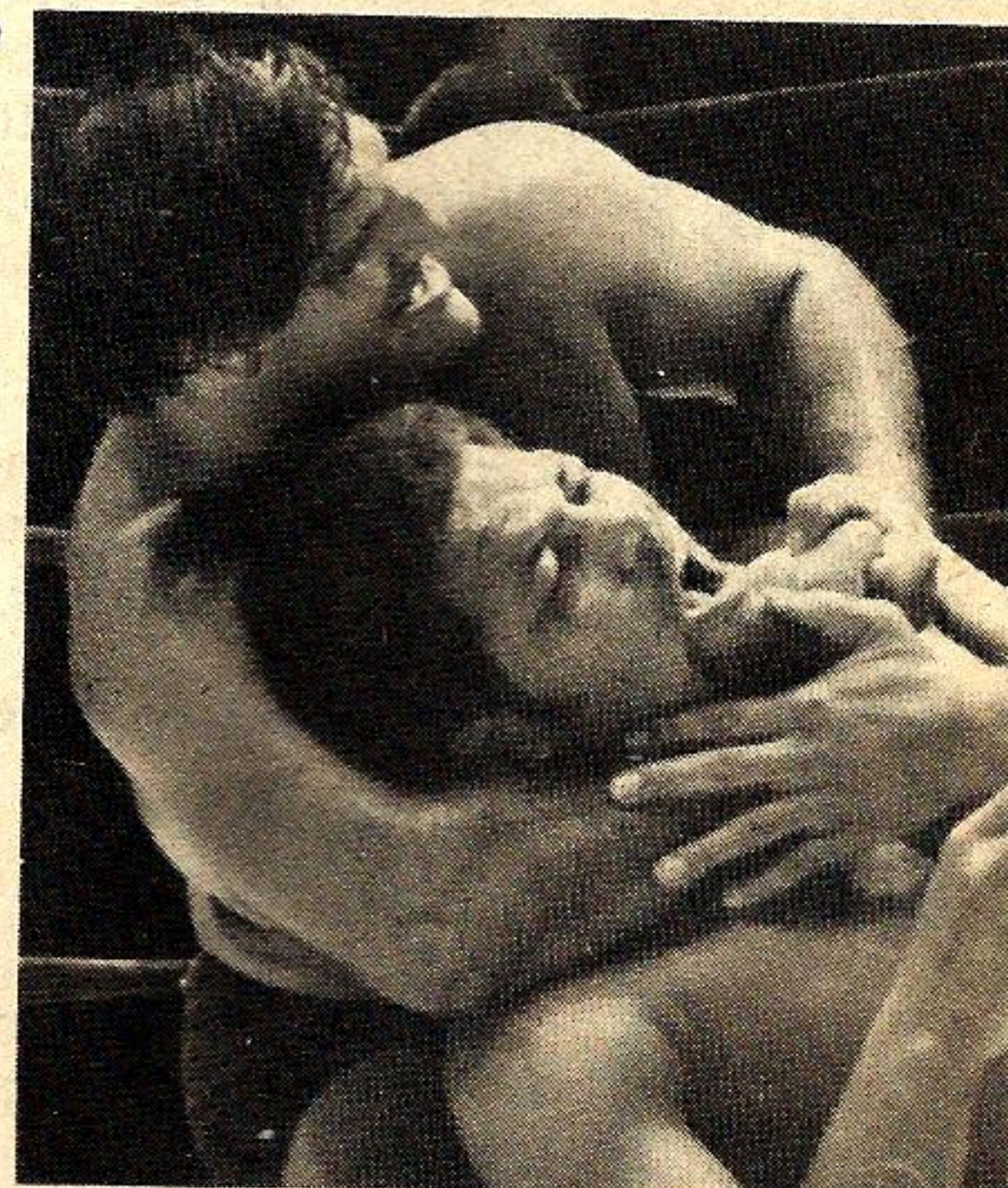
ERNIE LADD



Mil brings the giant wrestler down with a headlock (above) and then sends Ladd to the land of dreams with a sleeper (below). Can Mil do the same thing to Bruno Sammartino?



An enraged Bruno smashes a kick to Ernie Ladd's chest (above). As the crowd roars its full approval, Bruno captures his gargantuan foe in a brilliant necklock, which has Ladd in agony (right). Against Ladd, Bruno proved it's power and not size that is important!



ERNIE LADD—Bruno has met Ladd several times and wrestled brilliantly. Sammartino's grappling cunning and instincts anticipated Ladd's maneuvers and countered them beautifully. Ladd's larger size didn't seem to hinder Sammartino. Bruno introduced no new moves against Ladd, preferring to confront the giant with holds perfected over the years of great grappling.

Mascaras wrestled Ladd first while holding the Americas title and then while holding the IWA title. As far as Mil was concerned, a larger man was just a larger target. The two wrestled long and hard each time they met, Mil carefully avoiding Ernie's clutches. Mascaras lost no effectiveness by being cautious.

In strength against strength, Bruno lost nothing to the larger man. Against a man renowned for his power, Mil was still able to dominate the confrontation.

STAFF PREDICTIONS

Peter King, Editor-In-Chief

Without doubt, a Bruno Sammartino-Mil Mascaras confrontation would be the greatest event in wrestling history.

I have seen Bruno wrestle hundreds of times. I've witnessed Mil's abilities in the ring at least 50 times. And I feel Bruno would beat Mascaras in their head-to-head confrontation.

True, Mascaras is the most accomplished flying strategist in the sport. In addition, and many people tend to overlook this, Mil is one of wrestling's strongest men.

But when you talk about Bruno you are talking about *the* strongest man in the sport. And I feel this strength will finally win the bout for Bruno.

Mil can hope to use his speed to keep away from Bruno for only so long. Sooner or later Mil will have to move to center ring and trade holds with Bruno. When he does that, Mil Mascaras will become another victim of wrestling's living legend, Bruno Sammartino.

Bill Apter, Assistant Editor

One must put personal feelings aside to predict the outcome of what might shape up to be the greatest event in wrestling history. Knowing both Bruno and Mascaras personally for several years, this becomes difficult. But when I get down to what goes on in that squared circle I have to pick Bruno Sammartino.

Remember, Mascaras has never come across a wrestler like Bruno—a man with bruising power and a complete repertoire of holds. The closest Mil's come to a wrestler similar to Bruno was Ivan Koloff. Ivan held Mil to a sizzling draw. Bruno's beaten the Russian several times.

Mil Mascaras is one of wrestling's great immortals. But Bruno Sammartino is the one guy who can beat him.

Dan Shocket, Associate Editor

After studying the common opponents of Bruno Sammartino and Mil Mascaras, the different styles of the two men, and how each copes with the other's style, I have to believe Mil Mascaras will defeat Bruno Sammartino.

I realize picking anyone over Bruno is a risky thing to do. This is a man who has spent a career turning back all challenges to his supremacy. But even empires and legends must fall—Mascaras should conquer this living legend.

I believe Mascaras is the most astonishing grappler of our age. It will be no shame for Sammartino to fall to him. Even the great are no match for the best. In years to come, Mascaras will be acknowledged as the best of our era. His graceful skills will be unequalled in our lifetime.

Randy Gordon, Associate Editor

I pride myself on making accurate predictions of championship wrestling matches. Usually I don't have to even think twice about who the winner of a match will be.

Knowing Bruno personally, I believe in his ability 100 per cent. I know of no stronger human than Bruno. I've seen him reduce some very powerful wrestlers into defeated men.

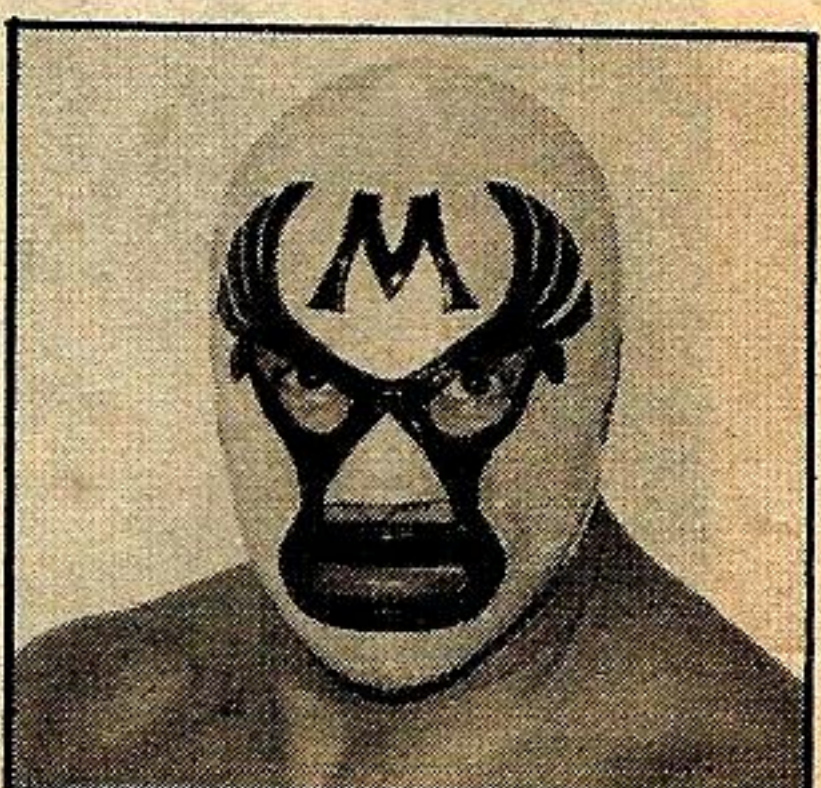
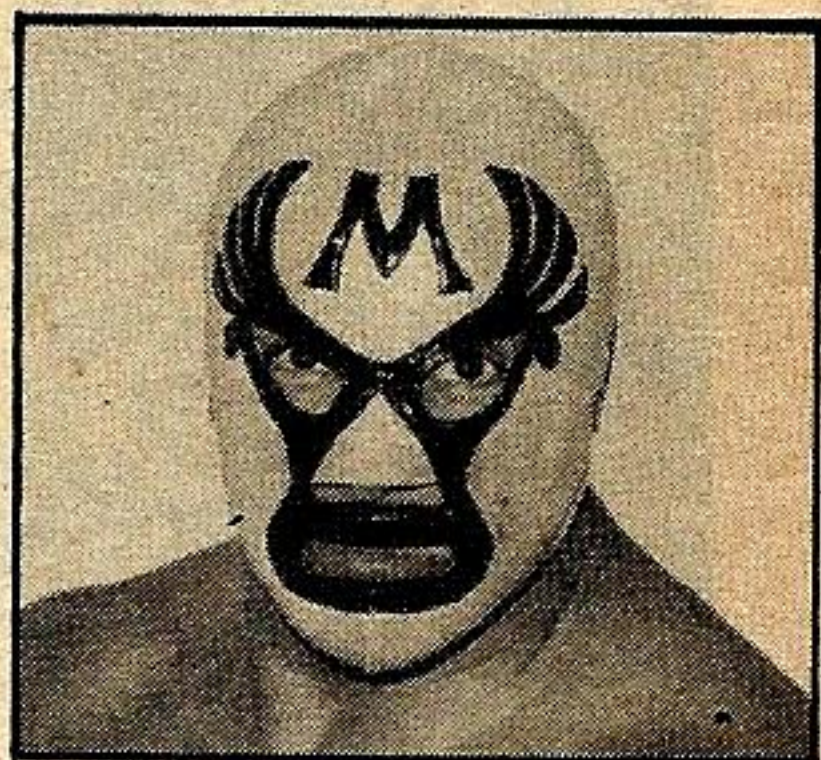
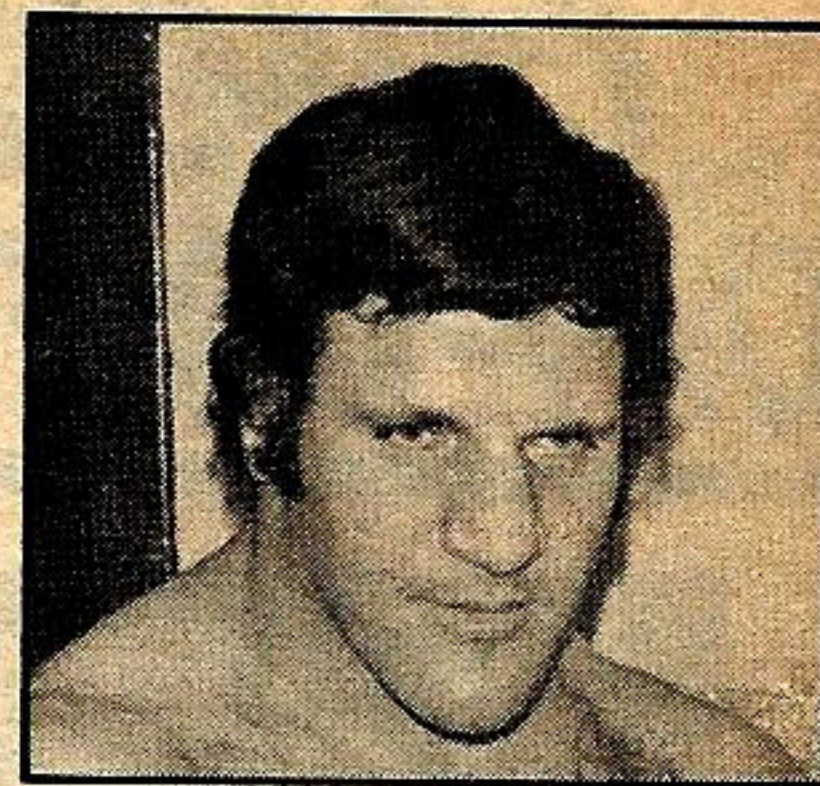
However, when I think of the many times all over this country I've seen Mascaras escape from seemingly inescapable holds, then finish his opponent off with a breathtaking flying body press, I have to think he'd emerge victorious over Sammartino in what would probably go down as the greatest match in wrestling history.

Michael B. Kape, Associate Editor

No one doubts when two great wrestlers like Bruno Sammartino and Mil Mascaras meet it will be a close contest. Though some would say the match would be too close to call in advance, I feel when the battle was over, only one man could possibly emerge as the winner: Mil Mascaras.

Over the past few years, it has been harder for Sammartino to beat his tough challengers. It could well be age is beginning to take its toll on the living legend. Meanwhile, Mascaras is just now coming into his prime as a wrestler.

If Mil can perfect the maneuvers necessary to stop a man like Sammartino, something highly probable, Bruno would have the toughest match of his career. His brawling style of wrestling is no comparison to the grace and beauty of Mil's style. The match would see Sammartino defeated by his Mexican opponent.

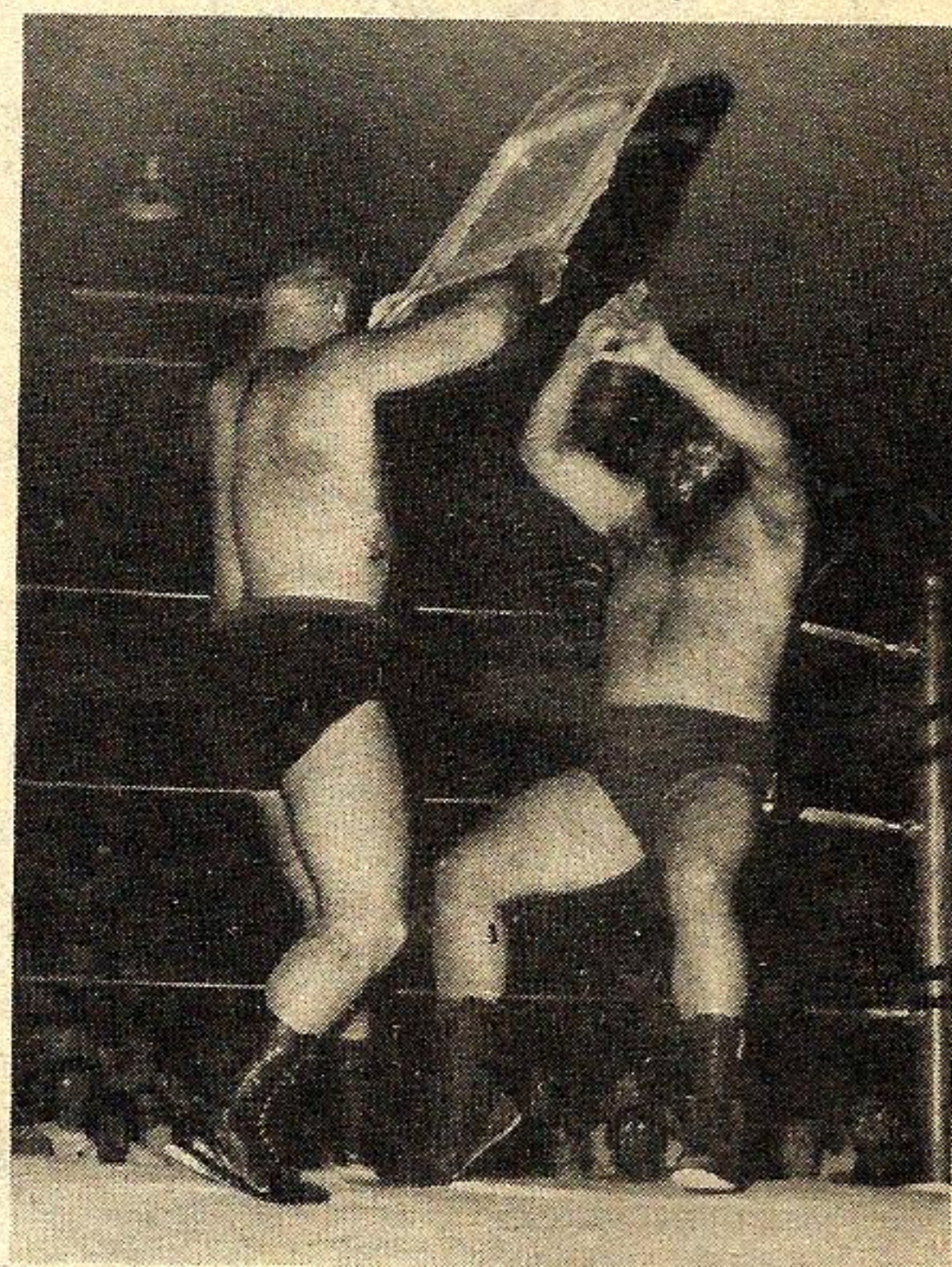


WRESTLING'S MOST SAVAGE RIVALRY

PHOTOS BY BILL BEACH



When you have Killer Brooks and Mad Dog Vachon hating each other, you can expect a bloodbath. But no one expected the kind of war which happened when the two did lock in combat!



Bleeding profusely from the forehead, Vachon grabs a chair outside the ring and charges at Brooks, who unsuccessfully tries to disarm him (left). Vachon returns to the ring and swings away wildly (above).

THERE WAS A tense excitement in the arena. The possibility a man might die before the night could not be ignored.

The hatred between Killer Brooks and Mad Dog Vachon was still fresh when the two met to settle their feud. A quarrel during a tag team match had found the two at each other's throats. Now they had vowed to destroy each other.

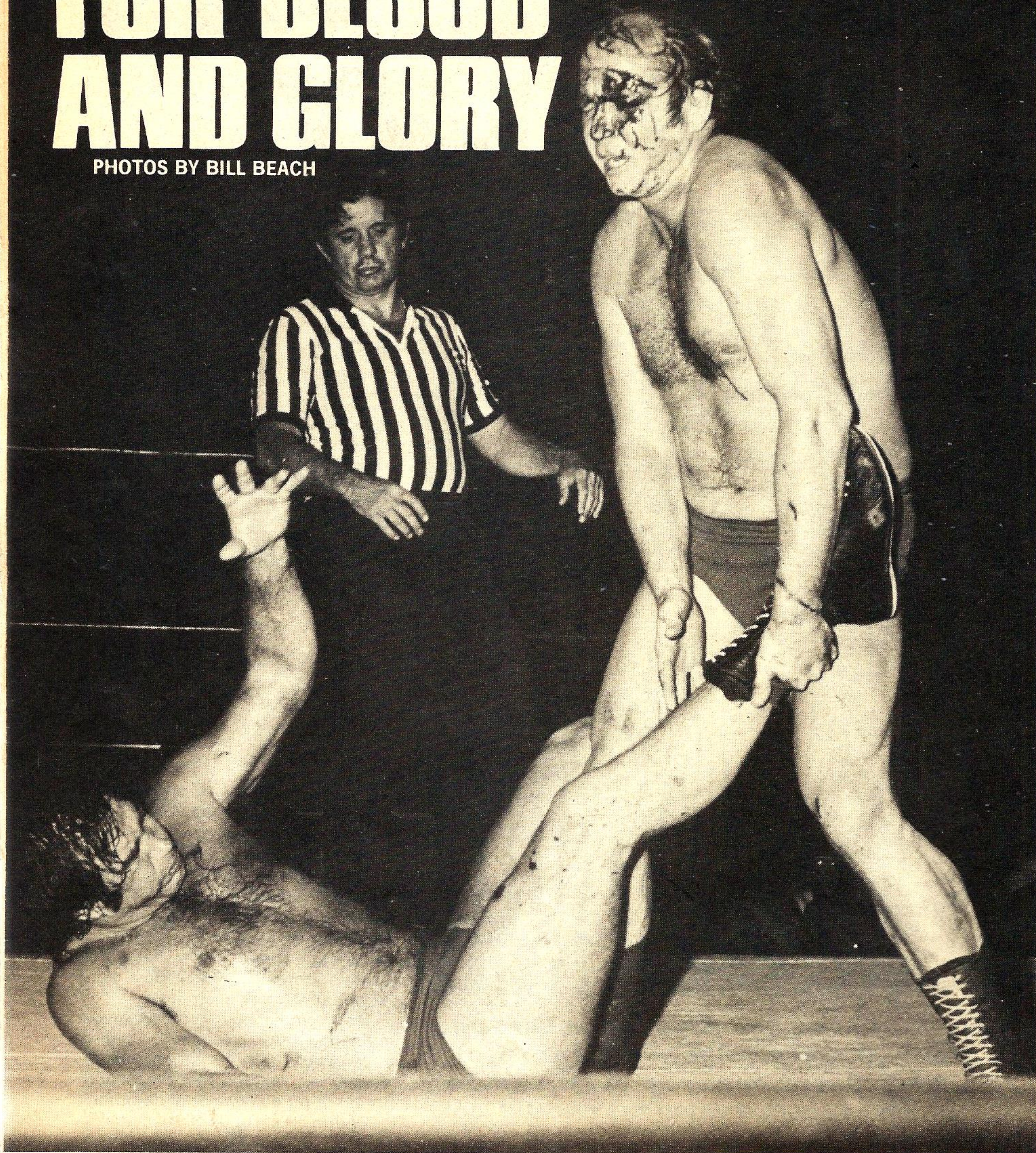
Both men are capable of mangling any opponent beyond recognition. Only the bloodiest chaos can result when these two men are pitted against each other.

Within 30 seconds of the match's

(Continued on page 56)

BRISCO AND FUNK FOR BLOOD AND GLORY

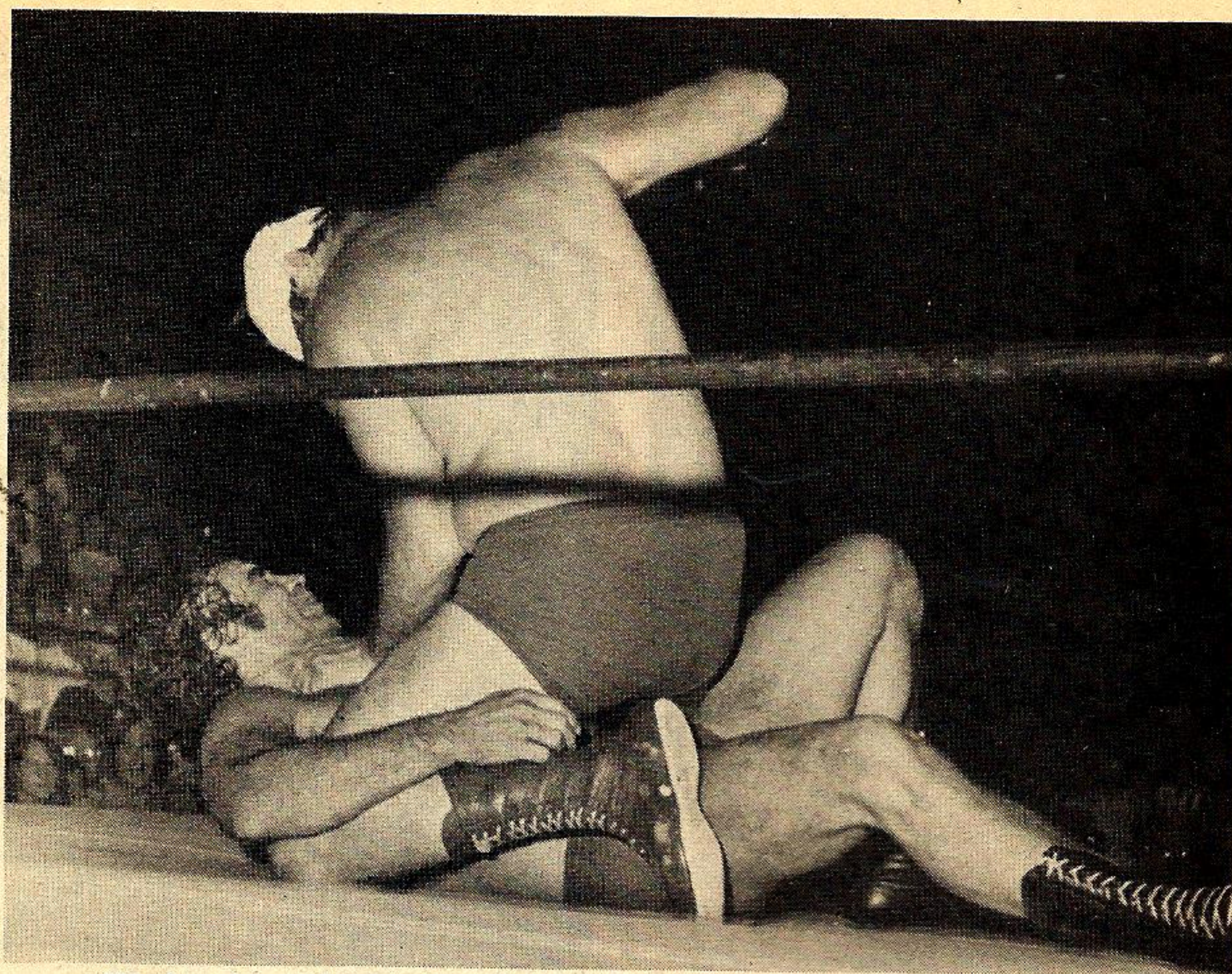
PHOTOS BY BILL BEACH



THE LINES OF strain etched on Jack Brisco's face betrayed his tension. In a few minutes, he would be entering the arena to face Dory Funk Jr; at stake would be Jack's NWA title. Despite their many classic confrontations, neither man could claim superiority over the other.

Perhaps no other man could understand the special difficulties a champion faces better than Dory, a man who once enjoyed a long reign as NWA champion. Jack knows Funk could understand his every need and desire; Brisco does not know what the hunger of a former champion can do to a man. The drives and passions of Funk were a mystery to Brisco.

"Funk knows what I have to do," Jack admitted before the match, "because he's done the same things himself. He can sense when I'm using technicalities to retain the title; nobody knows the rulebook better than Dory. He was a genius at doing everything within his power to keep being champion.



His head swathed in bandages to halt the flow of blood, Dory Funk Jr. is still able to mount an attack against Jack Brisco. Any other wrestler would have quit rather than risk permanent injury from the wounds; Dory continued to battle his hardest. This was the first match in which Funk and Brisco bled. The fans were shocked to see the rivalry between these two stars turn bloody!

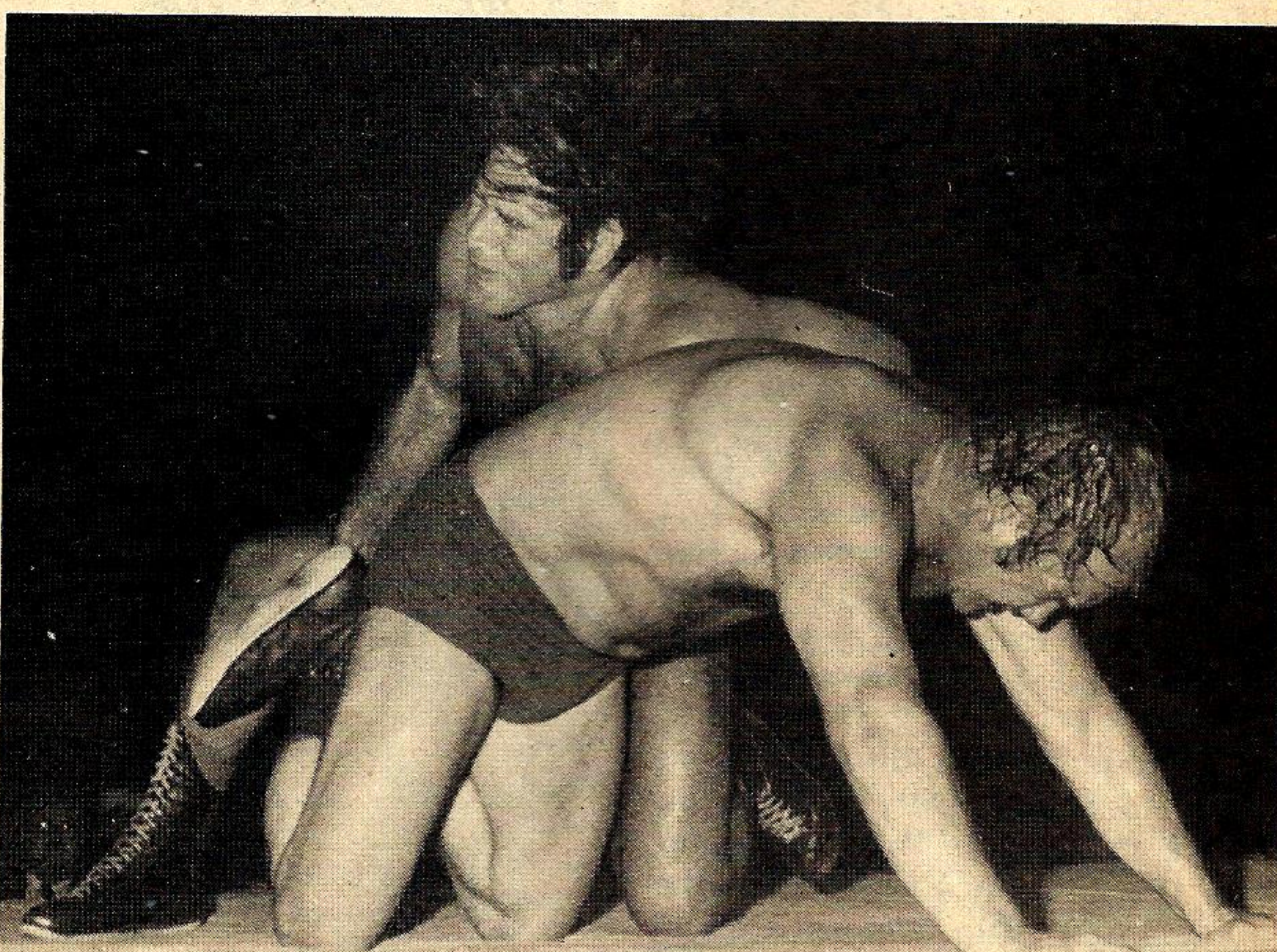
Dory Funk Jr. has long struggled to regain his NWA championship, a crown now worn by Jack Brisco. The matches between these two are as complex as the men themselves

"Men who haven't been champion can't anticipate moves like Dory can. He has a trigger mind and great reflexes. He's a cunning scientific wrestler who has tasted the glory of being champion. That guarantees a great match for the fans and the toughest kind of match for me.

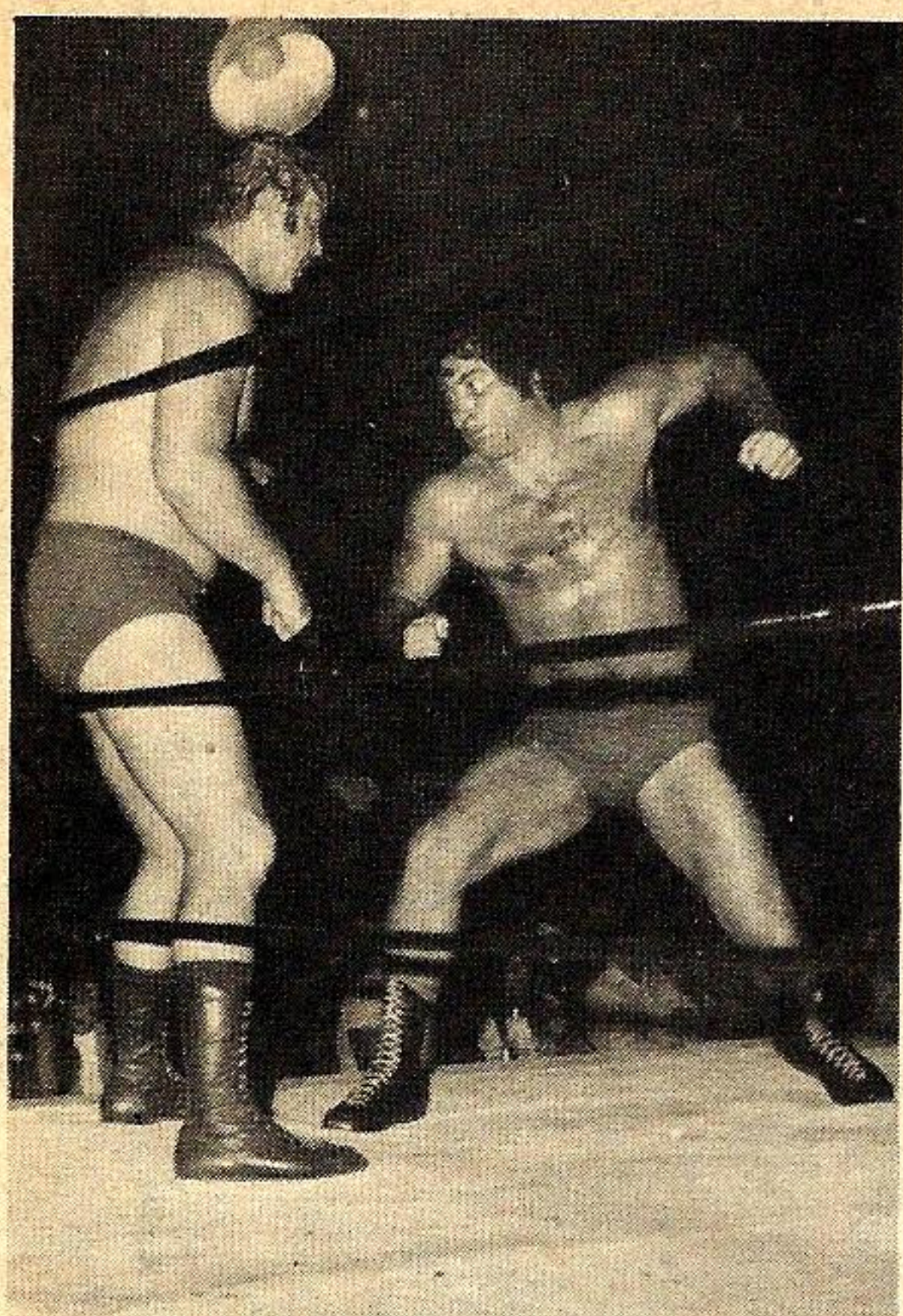
"It's strange, but I both hate and love these matches. They require the most work and most strategy. I've also come closer to losing my title against Dory than any other wrestler. I respect him as much as any man in wrestling. In this business, it's a thin line between respect and fear.

"However, I need matches like this. When I leave the arena with the belt around my waist, I know I'm the best wrestler in the world. And I proved it against a grappler whose scientific skills are unquestioned.

"At times, being champion makes you lose track of why you became a wrestler. You become so intent on remaining top man you take on challengers who only brawl and



It takes all of Dory's strength to prevent Jack from bringing him to the canvas early in the match. These two superb athletes use all their cunning and power in these matches yet still are unable to settle the question as to which man is the better grappler!



Above: Jack puts his entire body behind a forearm smash late in the brawl. Against the ropes, Dory can't escape. Right: Blinded by his own blood during the second fall, Dory stumbles across the canvas!

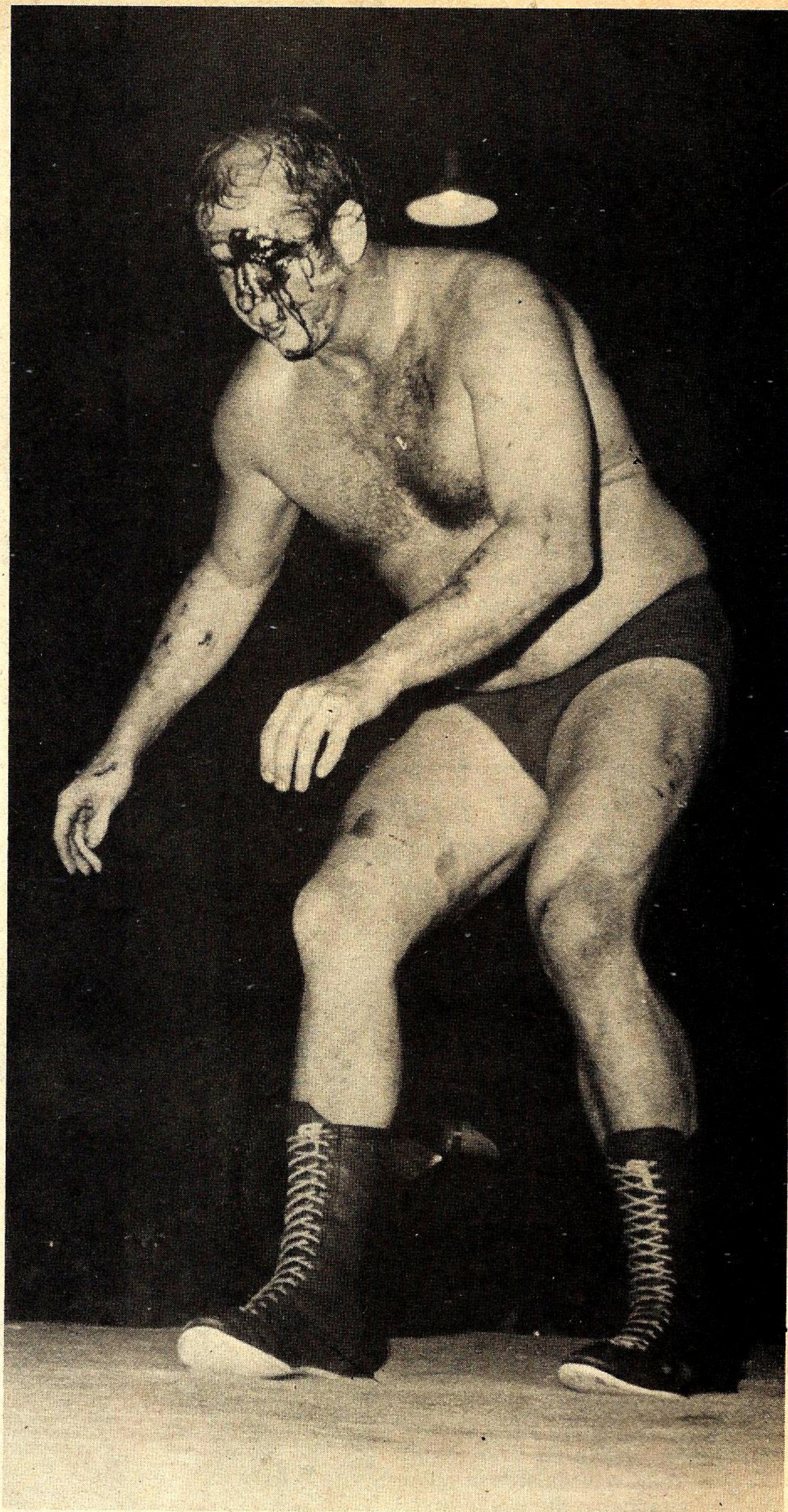
have nothing to do with the sport you love. Matches you want to take are put off as you meet guys who are insults to wrestling. It gets to the point when you wonder if it's worth the effort.

"Against Dory, every skill I enjoy using can be executed. When it works against a man like Dory, it's the greatest thrill going. I can't compare the thrill to anything else. That is the feeling I have executing a great move against a scientific opponent. And it is this thrill which makes wrestling worthwhile.

As Jack talked, Dory sat in another dressing room. One only had to look in his eyes to see the hunger he felt for the NWA title. Friends have long said Dory lost something of himself when he lost the NWA belt. For years, he has been trying to regain it. In a few minutes, he would make another attempt.

"Champions are different from other people," Dory murmured before the match, "and you don't lose the difference when you lose the championship. You are marked for life. There are times when I wish I had never won it.

"A lot of people have accused me of being obsessed with winning back the title. They don't understand; they've never been champions. If I retire undefeated,



that's different; it's being a loser that eats you up. The Bible says, 'I must go into my father's house justified.' That's the way I want to end my career—justified."

When it comes to talking about the present NWA champion, Dory is

uncomfortable. His dislike for Brisco as a person doesn't mean he underestimates either Jack's ability or the title itself.

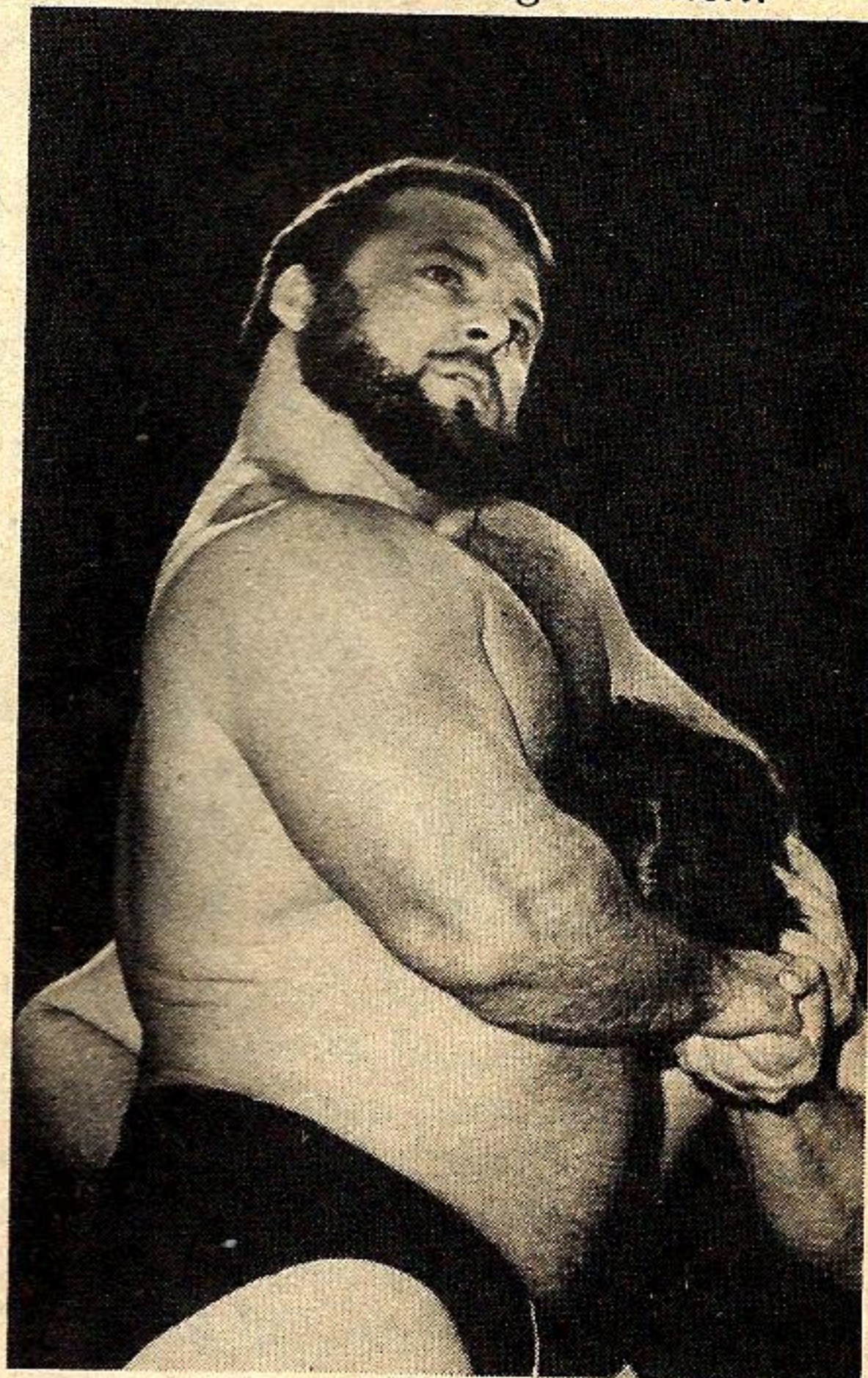
"Only an idiot," Dory contends, "would claim Brisco isn't an
(Continued on page 64)



THE STRANGE MISSION OF IVAN PUTSKI

Ivan Putski is one of the most popular wrestlers in the world today. Yet, Ivan is still not satisfied he has escaped the horror which drove him into wrestling

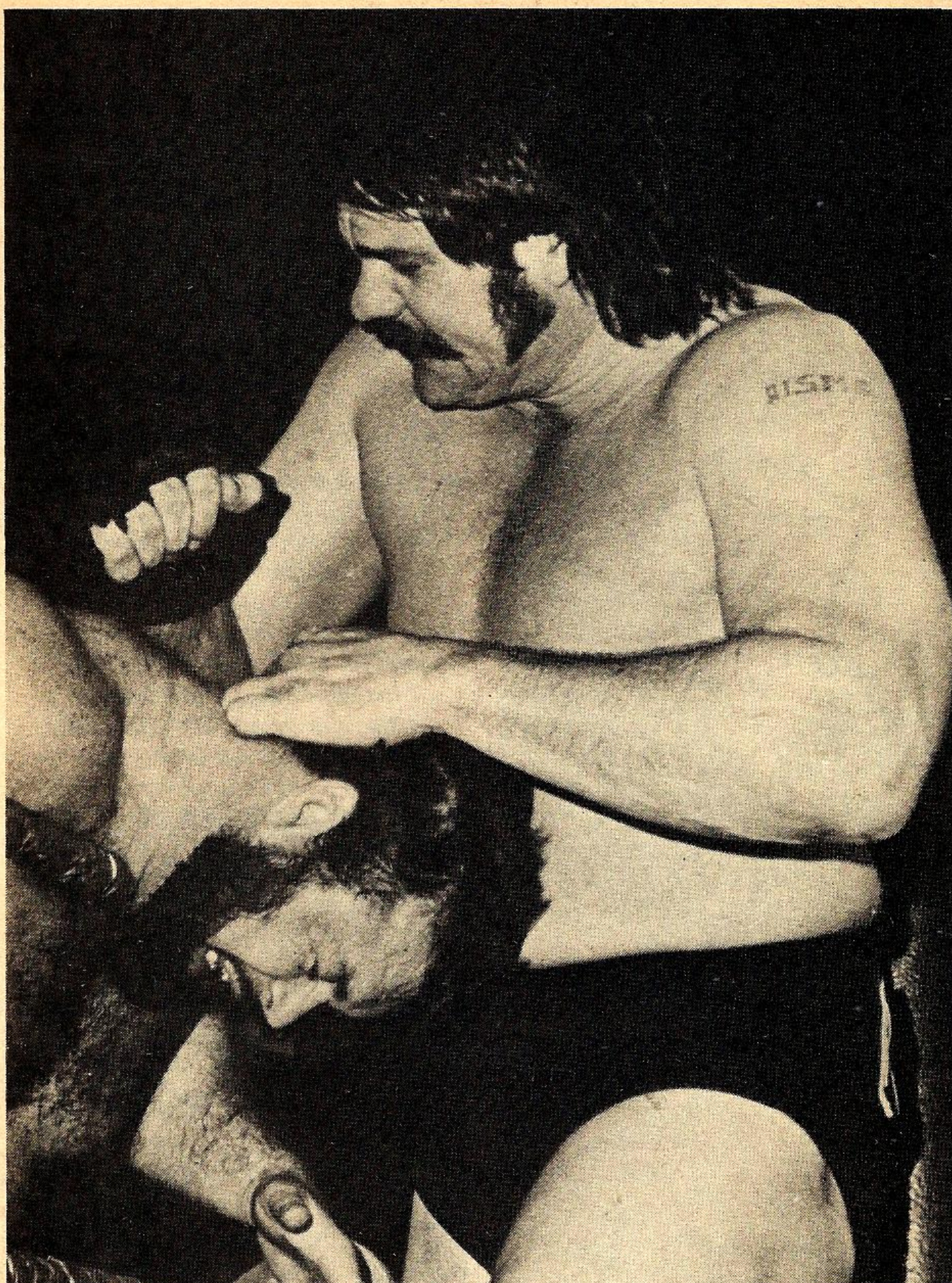
Ivan Putski (left) is one of the most popular mat stars in the world. But his great and widespread acclaim isn't enough for this man haunted by the demons of his past. Memories of his childhood drive Ivan to batter opponents like Blackjack Mulligan (below). Ivan takes on the world's toughest men!



A S THE TERRIFIED child fled the battleground of occupied Poland, he cried for a friendly, comforting word. All around him lay death and destruction. No one cared about the fate of one little boy. Everyone wept for his own private tragedies. No one had strength to show compassion for another.

In the cold of war's terror, the boy vowed he would make people love him. He would become so important, so popular he would never again be ignored. Nothing would stand in his way. Never again would he suffer at the hands of those who cared nothing for him.

As the lad matured, he grew to be



an extraordinary athlete, powerful and agile. He could easily best any of his companions and he excelled in sports. Choosing to participate in solo rather than team sports, he soon earned a name for himself. The people in his village began to respect and admire him.

But the youngster learned it was not within the villagers' powers to make him an important person; they were under the domination of others. If he was going to be a great man, one who controlled rather than be controlled, he would have to earn a reputation outside the village.

So when he grew to be an adult, Ivan Putski left his village and traveled to the United States. He decided to become a professional wrestler. This was his greatest skill. He was determined to become the most popular wrestler in the world!

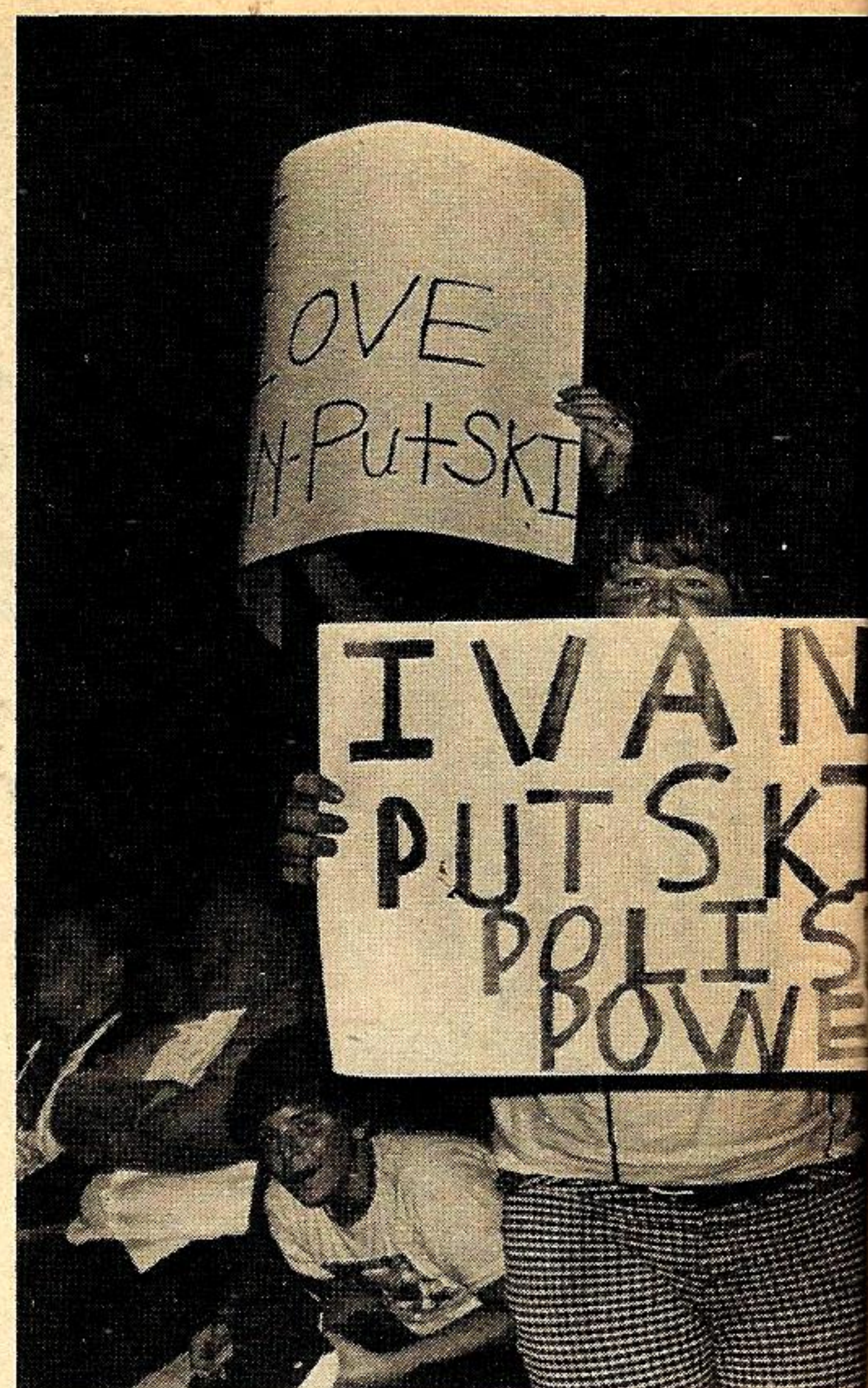
Slowly but surely, Ivan built a following of loyal fans. He rejoiced in their approval and began to enjoy

himself as he never had before. His lost childhood was recaptured; Ivan treated himself to the toys he could never afford and indulged himself with childlike innocence. The fans, realizing he was a special person, grew to love him.

Ivan toured the world, thrilling spectators wherever he went. Even without a world title, his popularity grew to epic proportions. Ivan Putski was succeeding on the mission which had taken him all over the globe; he became beloved and important. He would never be ignored again.

Today, Ivan continues his quest to be the world's most popular wrestler. Childhood memories drive him on. If there is a single boo among 20,000 cheers, Ivan becomes panicky. He is only too painfully aware of what one angry man can accomplish.

Other wrestlers watch Ivan in awe. To ensure and expand his popularity, Putski is tireless. He will



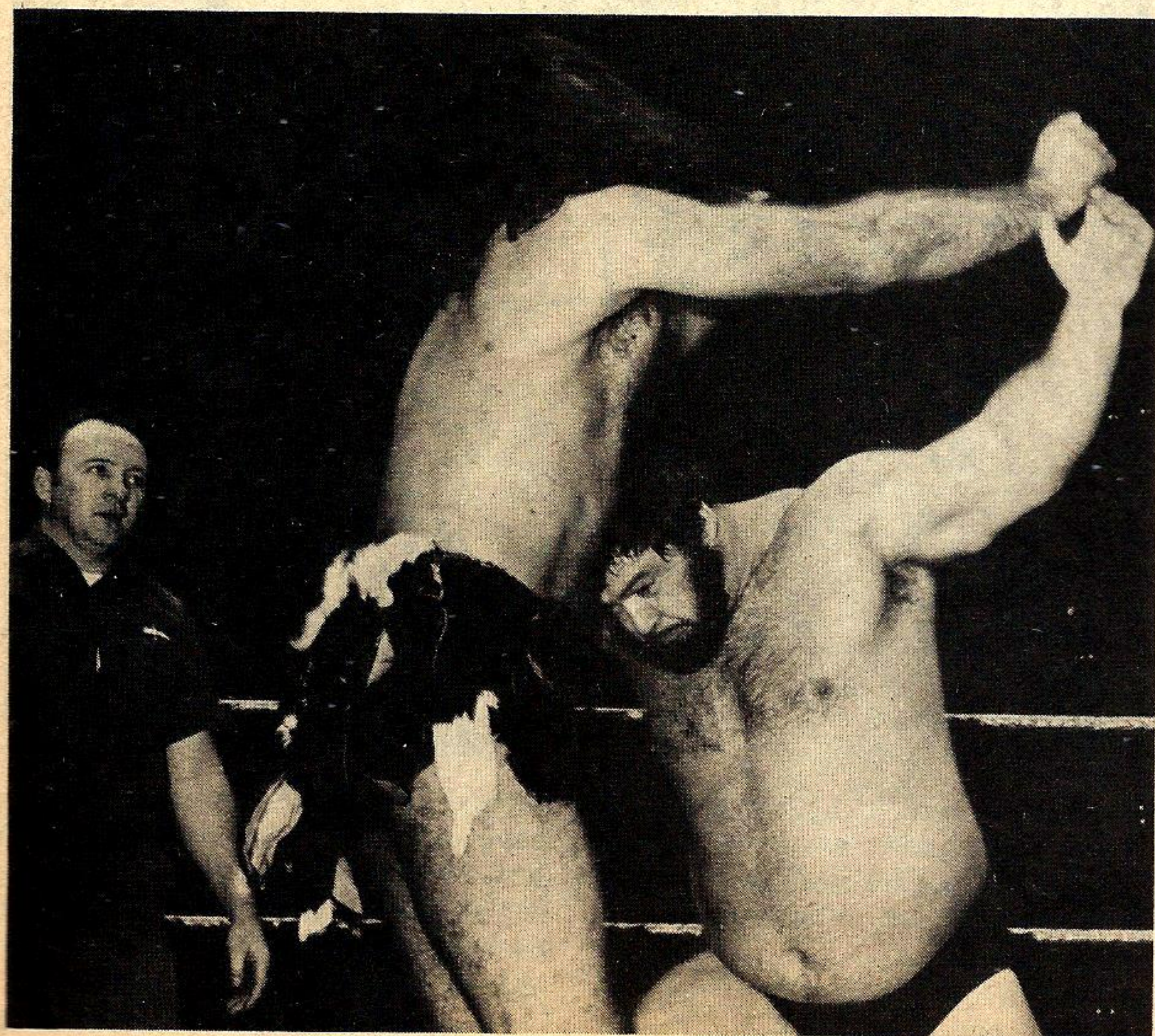
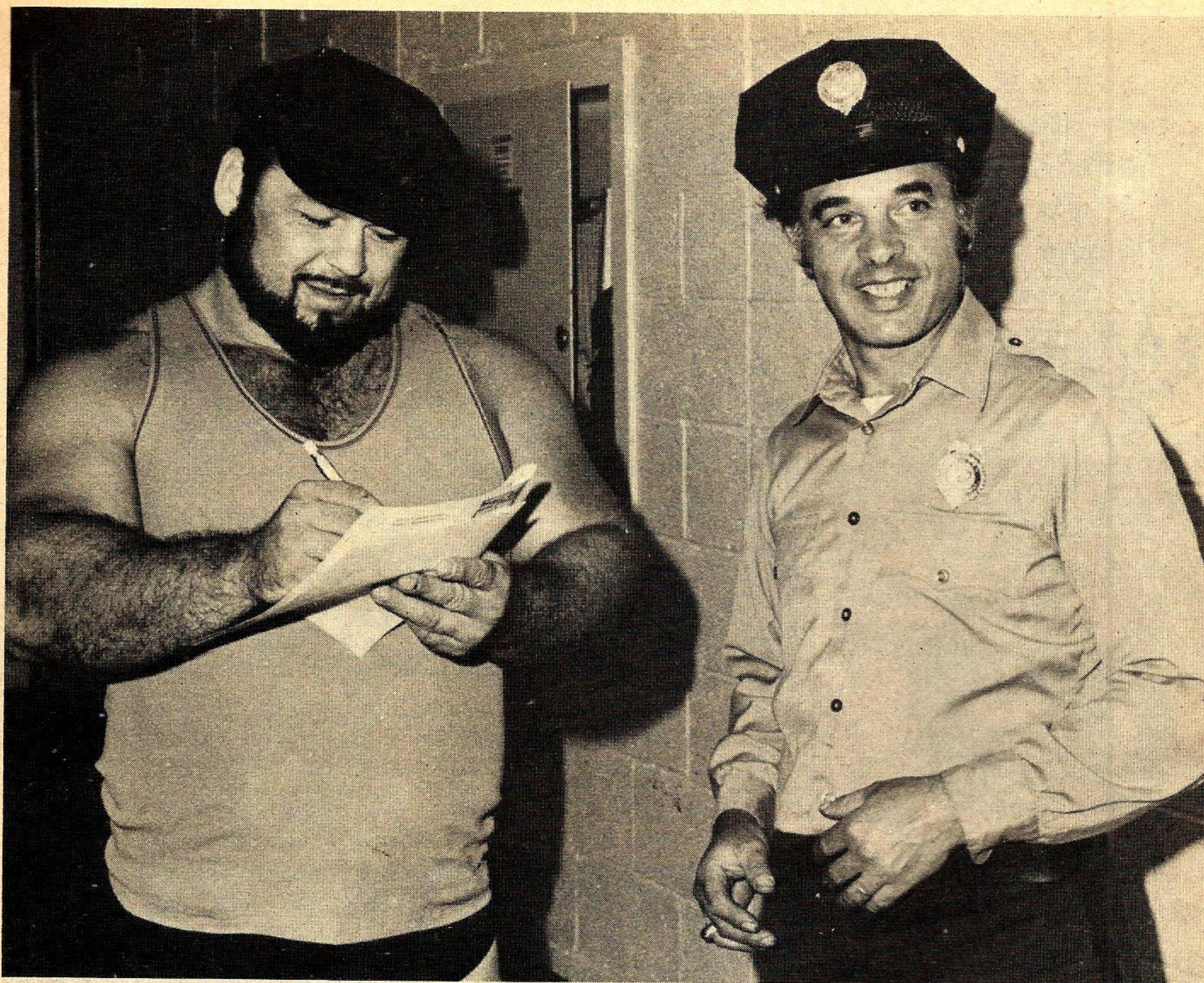
Fans who travel to arenas and wave banners proclaiming their love for Ivan (above) make the torture Putski suffers at the hands of Blackjack Mulligan worthwhile (left). Ivan will go out of his way to sign an autograph for an arena officer (opposite page, right). Ivan will also go to any extreme to defeat grapplers like Wolfman (opposite page, below) if it will please his legion of fans.

wrestle more times a week against top competition than any other professional grappler. He risks his career time and time again to hear one more cheer from the crowd.

However, it should not be thought Ivan's compulsion makes him unhappy. There is no happier man in wrestling. For the first time in his life, people everywhere really care about him. He loves the fans and the friends he has made. Other grapplers often wish they could enjoy anything half as much as Ivan delights in his toys. The cheers following his victories remain the sweetest sounds he's ever heard.

But this happiness is not enough for him. In the dark of night, he fears it will all be lost. Ivan knows only too well professional athletes do not enjoy careers as long as non-athletic professionals. What will happen to him after he is forced into retirement is a fear constantly haunting him.

Therefore, Ivan pushes himself



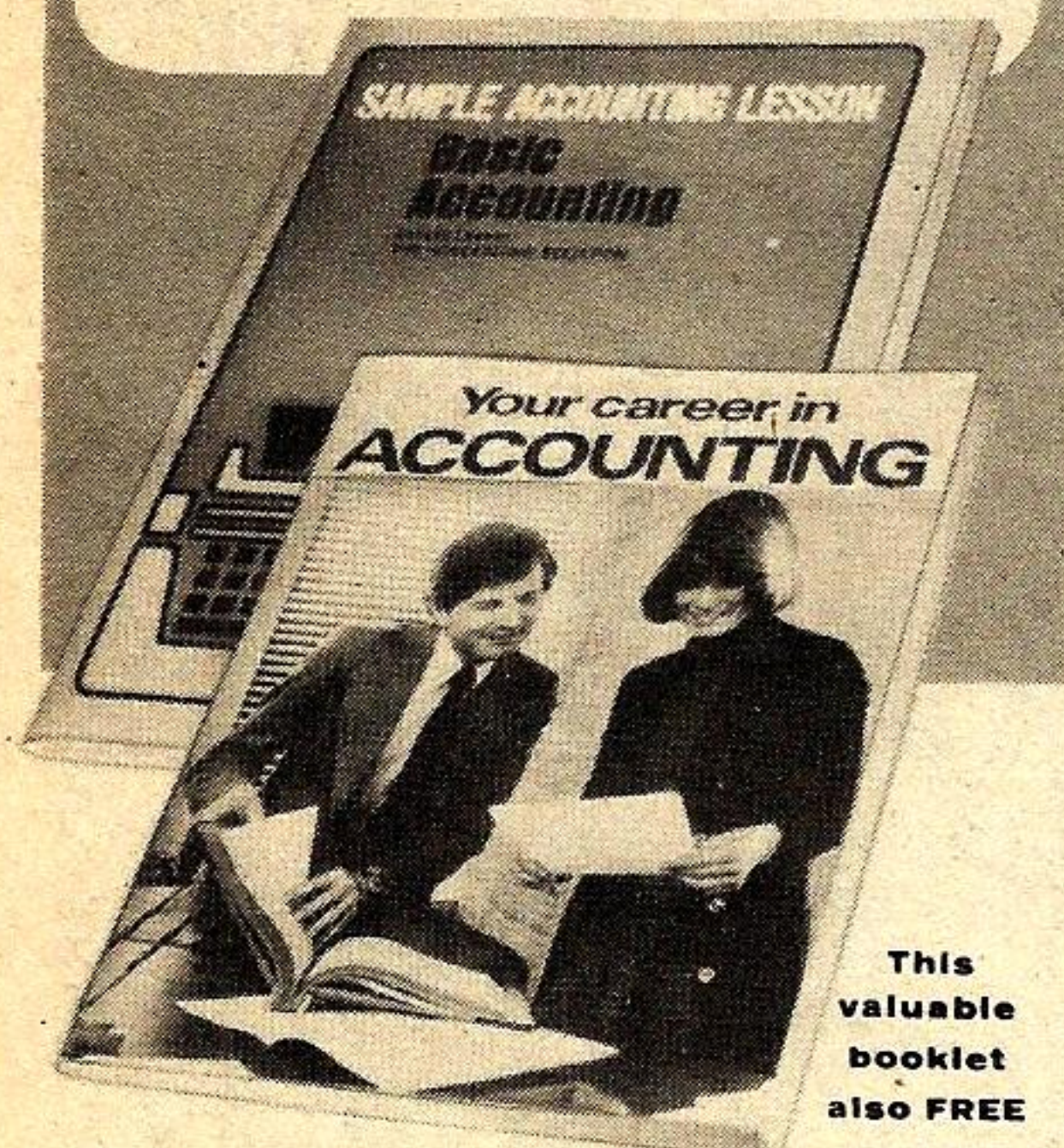
beyond the limits of human endurance to remain popular. He believes he can earn enough love and popularity to last him a lifetime. He wants to be beloved even as an old man.

On his popularity-seeking mission, Ivan has faced the toughest men in wrestling. In less than a month, he faced both Bugsy McGraw and Blackjack Mulligan. It usually takes more than a month to recover from a match against either man. Putski took them on one right after the other. The fans recognize this great accomplishment and adore Ivan.

This great grappler has many years left to win even more fans. Already, he ranks among the most beloved wrestlers in the world. And his ability will keep the legend of Ivan Putski alive in wrestling history.

Friends of Ivan's asked for this story to be printed. They wanted the fans to know why Ivan takes the risks he does and behaves in his unique manner. They believe after reading of his secret mission, the fans will always love Ivan Putski. □

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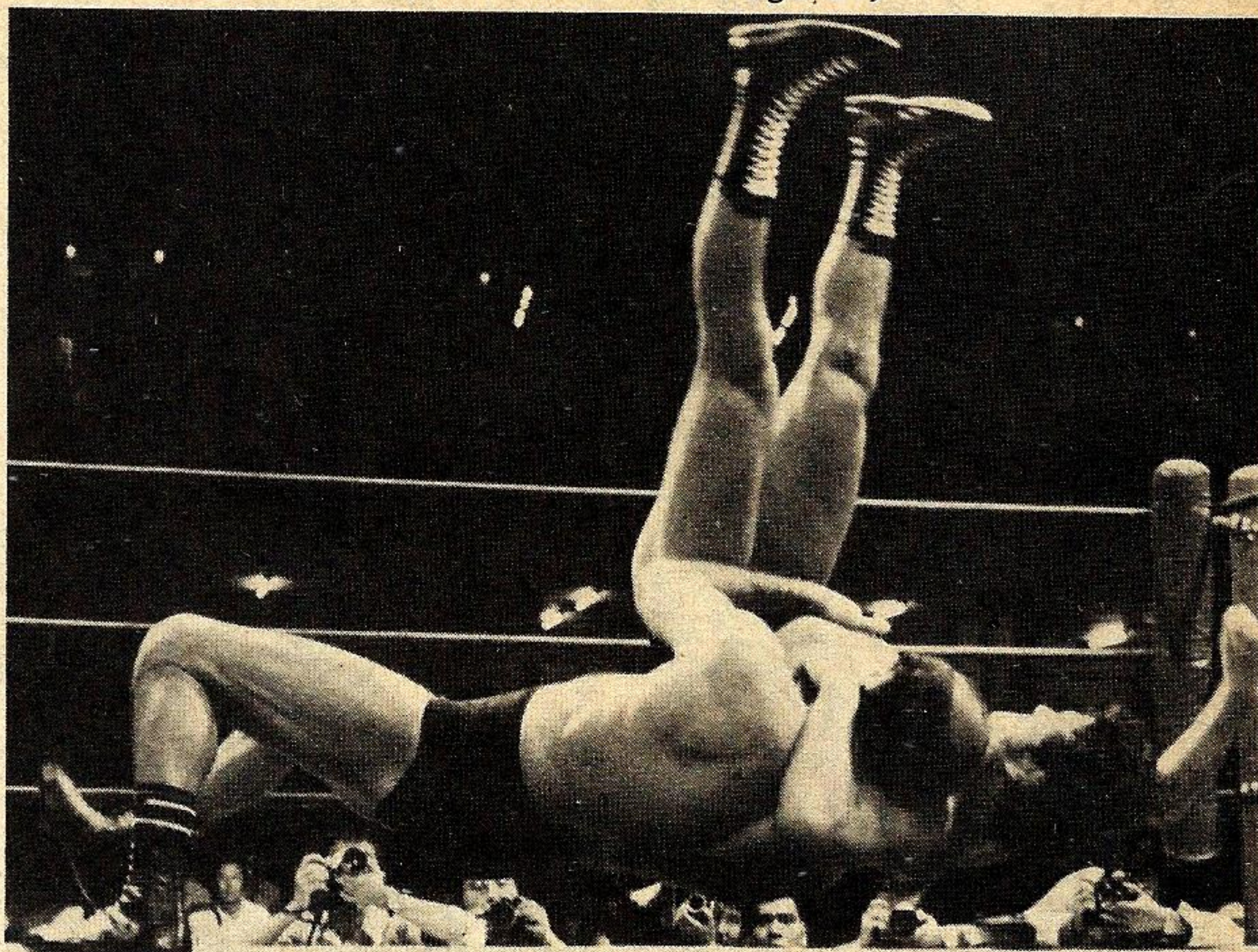
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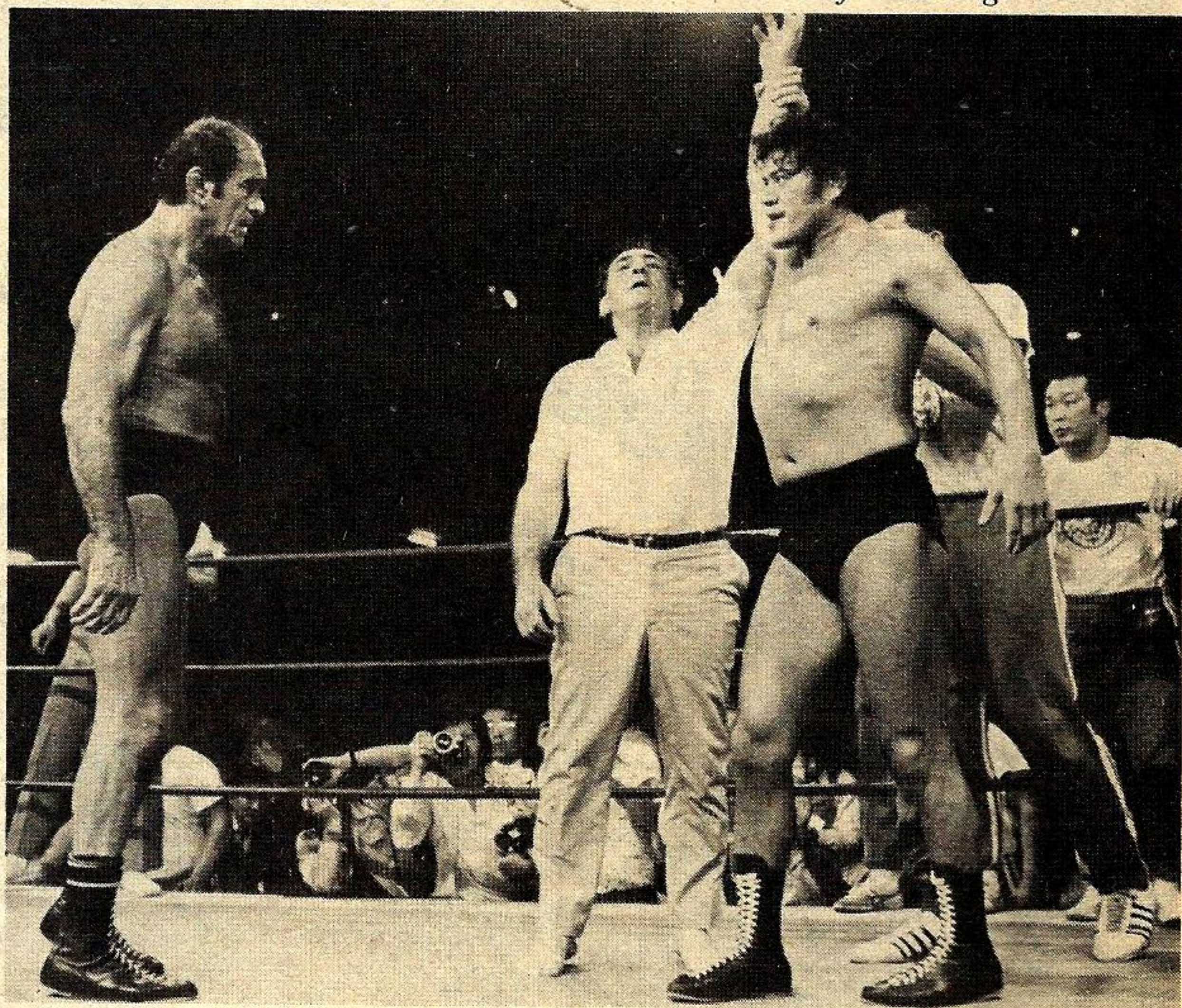
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THE CHAMPIONS

(Continued from Page 21)



Above: Captured in an Inoki headlock, Thesz calls upon his veteran cunning to backdrop Inoki, forcing the Japanese mat star to free him. Few men in wrestling would have the presence of mind to use a backdrop this cleverly. Below: A disappointed Thesz watches in sorrow as Inoki's hand is raised in victory. Yet, the crowd is cheering both men for their brilliant exhibition of wrestling.



Both men were in action from the opening seconds, never daring to relax. Every decision was made instantly, the natural reflexes of years of experience.

Within five minutes after the opening bell, Inoki fell to Thesz's

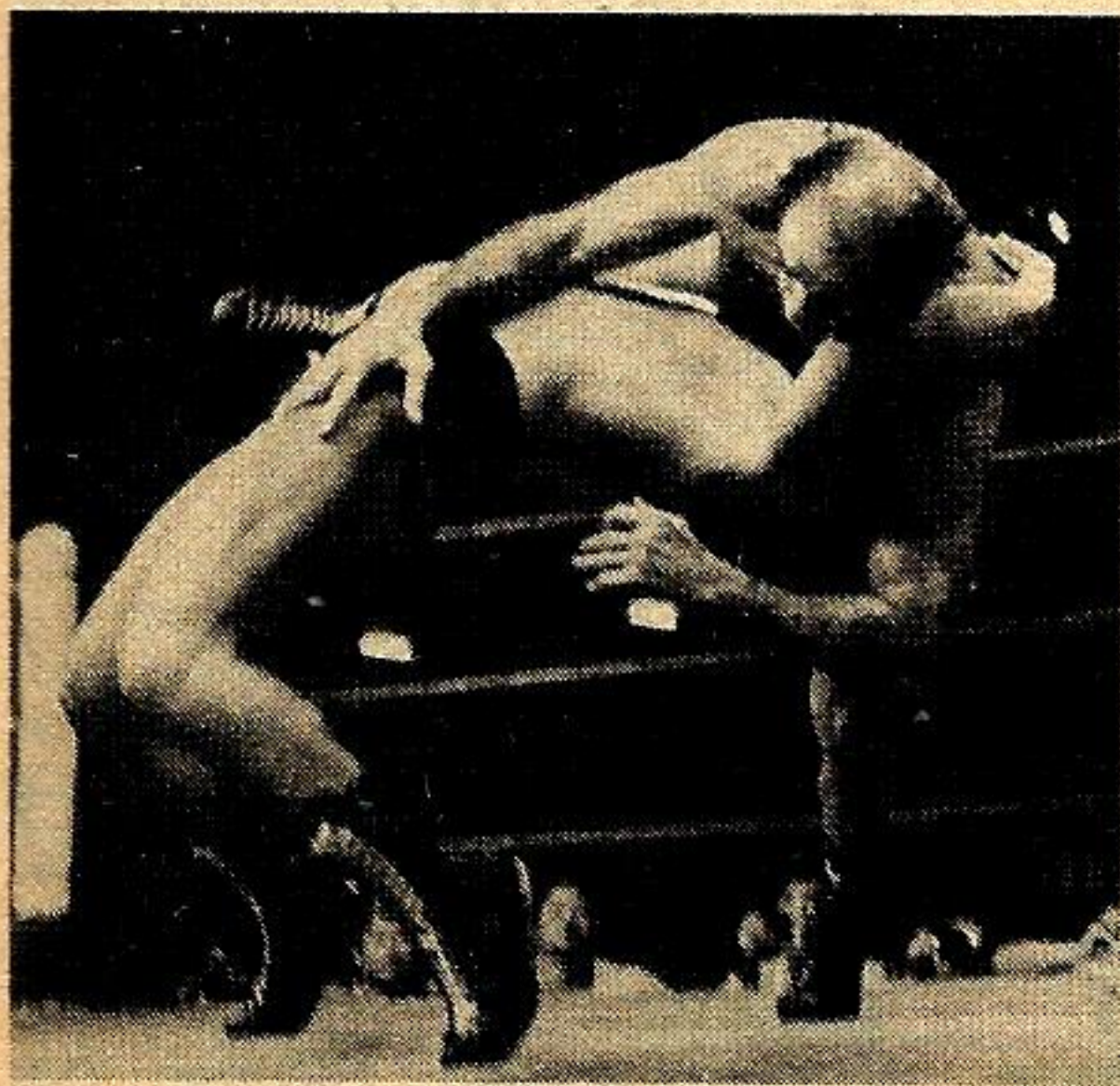
suplex. The greatest men in wrestling have suffered similar fates and Inoki saw no shame in it. It was a learning experience as far as the Japanese mat star was concerned. He would never again be set up in the same way again.

Inoki was too seasoned a

professional to grow cautious for the second fall. He had planned months for this match and losing the first fall was not about to rattle him.

Thesz underestimated Inoki—he expected the Japanese mat star to be on the defensive. Lou charged at his opponent and Inoki met him head on. Lou became confused for a fraction of a second. It was a fraction of a second too long. Inoki dominated the action and finally tied the match less than two minutes later.

The crowd, having already witnessed some of the most technically inspired wrestling it had ever seen, sensed the third fall would showcase some of the best wrestling yet. The final fall exceeded expectations.




Inoki tries to bridge as Thesz attempts to keep the Japanese mat star down. Antonio was successful in avoiding the pin

For over 15 minutes, the two men traded holds with scientific ferocity. They did not need to resort to outrageous illegal moves, though few men could have survived the extraordinary punishment these two grapplers endured as a matter of course. Two superb athletes, in peak condition, displayed the sport at its best.

Then, with the swiftness of all great maneuvers, Inoki trapped Thesz in his patented blockbuster hold. Lou struggled but his face betrayed his recognition of the hopelessness of escape. Inoki had won the match.

The crowd leaped to its feet as referee Rocca raised Antonio's arm in victory. They were applauding more than the man's success, however; the cheers were for two great grapplers. Thesz was being rewarded by as many cheers as Inoki.

It has been a great match, a classic confrontation between two excellent mat stars. Matches like this one prove wrestling is the most exciting sport in the world! □



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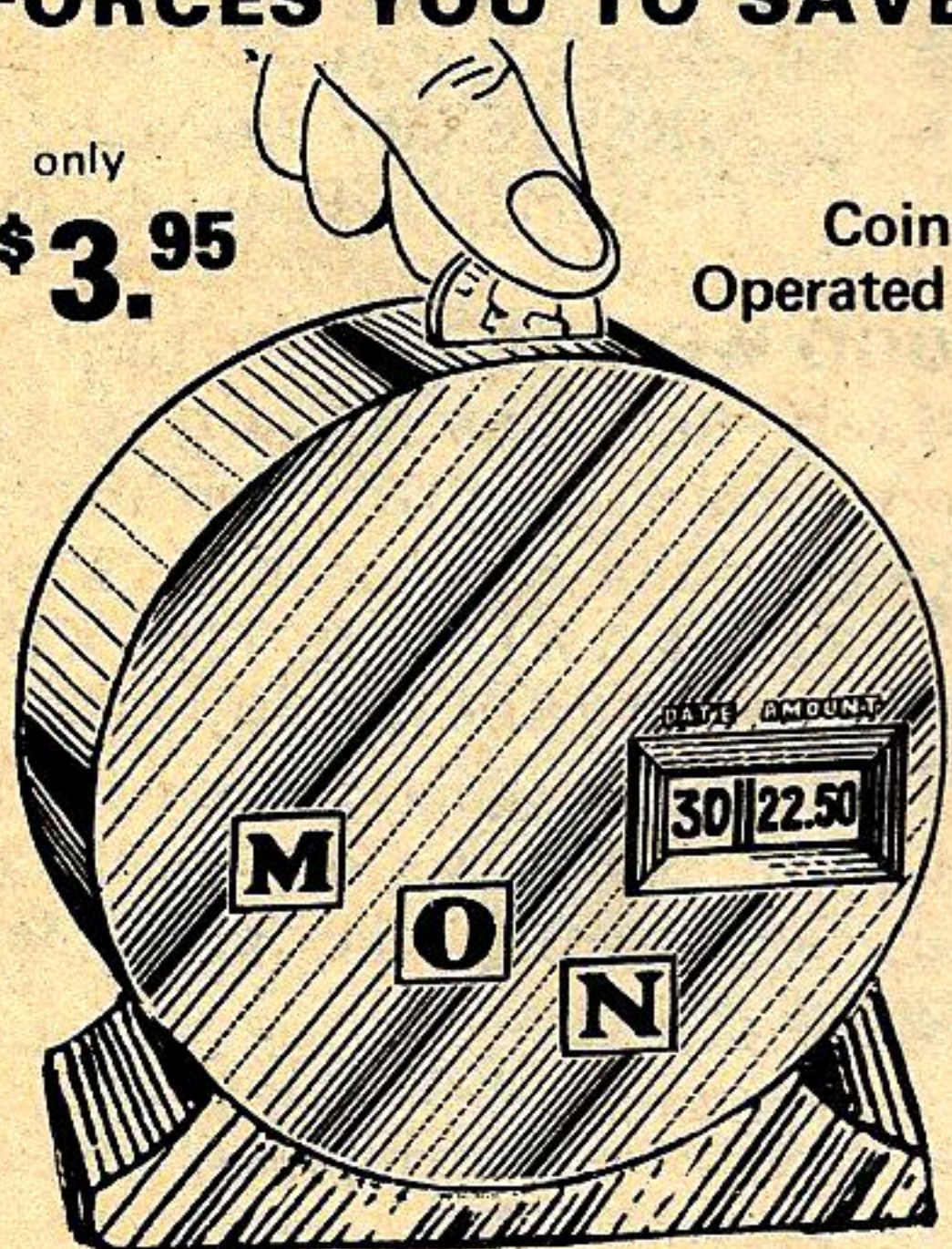
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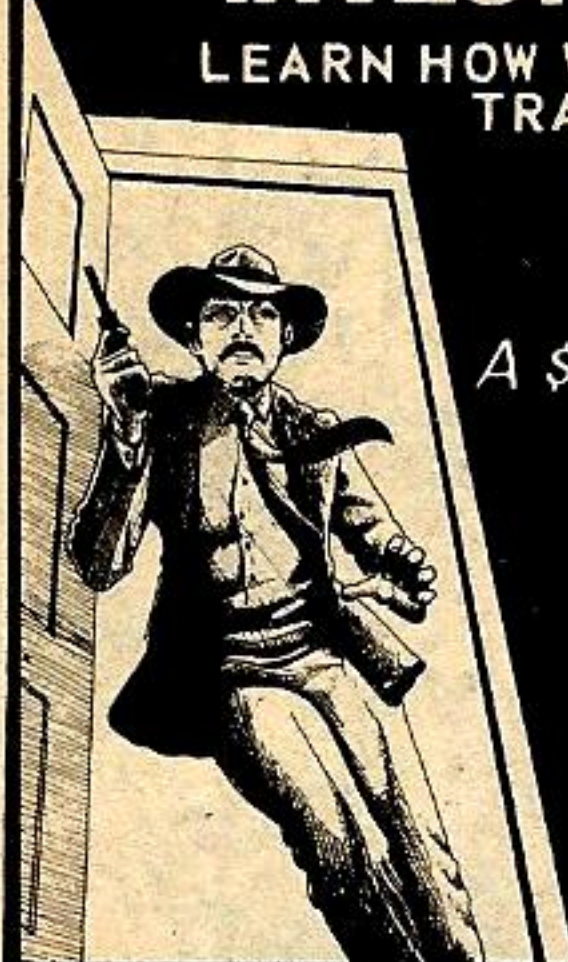
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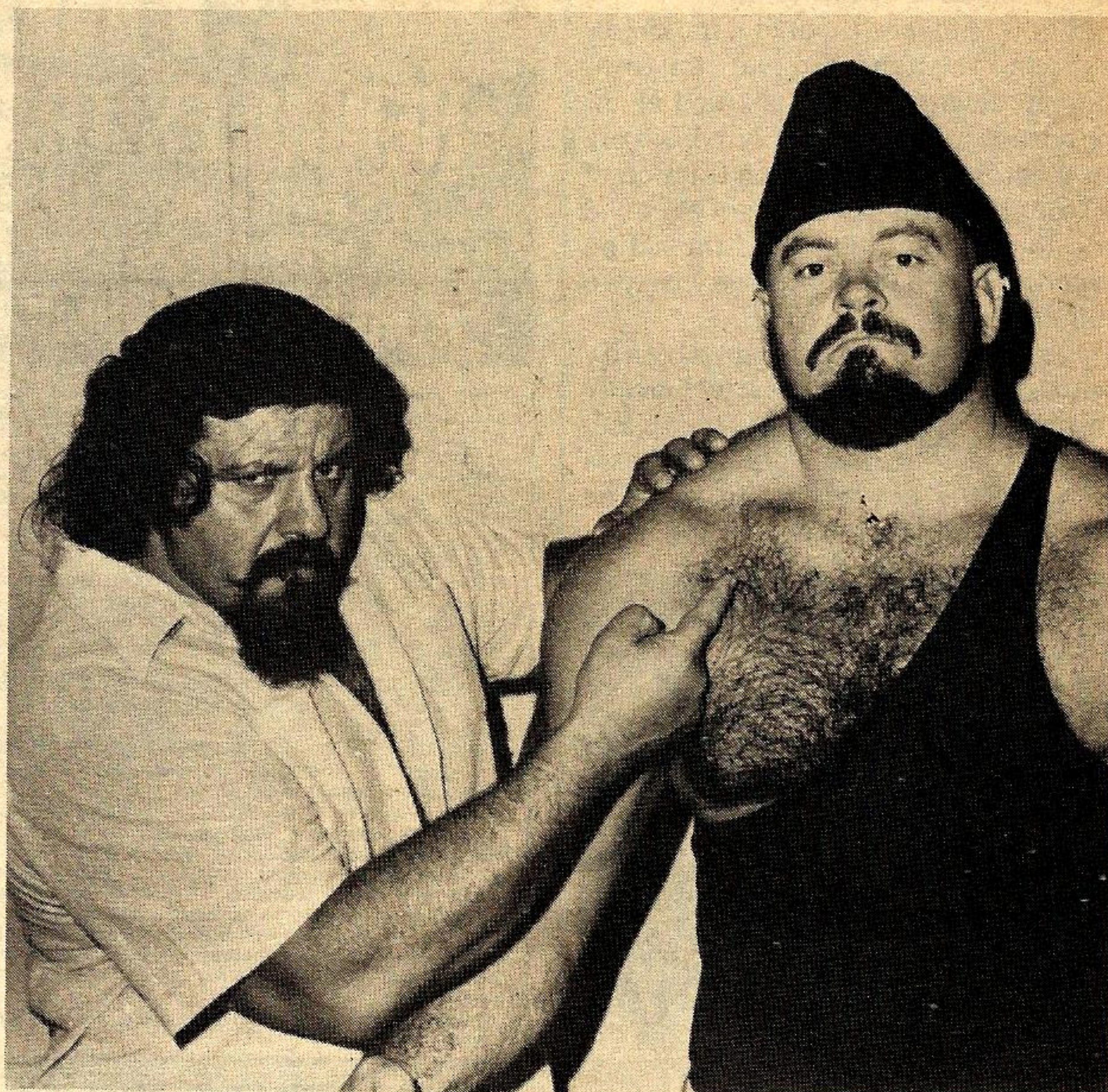
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YOUR LETTERS

(Continued from Page 10)



Lou Albano hopes to bring Ivan Koloff to the WWWF championship, the one honor an Albano grappler has yet to earn. While most fans despise the controversial manager, one fan writes saying Lou has not received enough credit for his many and varied successes!

phony you really are!

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Reading, Pennsylvania

GOOD WORD FOR LAWLER

Every time your magazines do a story on Jerry Lawler, you make it look like "The King" is in the wrong.

JERRY LAWLER IS THE KING
AND ALWAYS WILL BE!

Let's stop making excuses for the rats who are Jerry's opponents and start appreciating the great Jerry Lawler!

LARRY COX
Memphis, Tennessee

CREDIT FOR ALBANO

I think Captain Lou Albano deserves more credit than he currently receives.

Albano lead The Blackjacks to the title which they defended well. He's

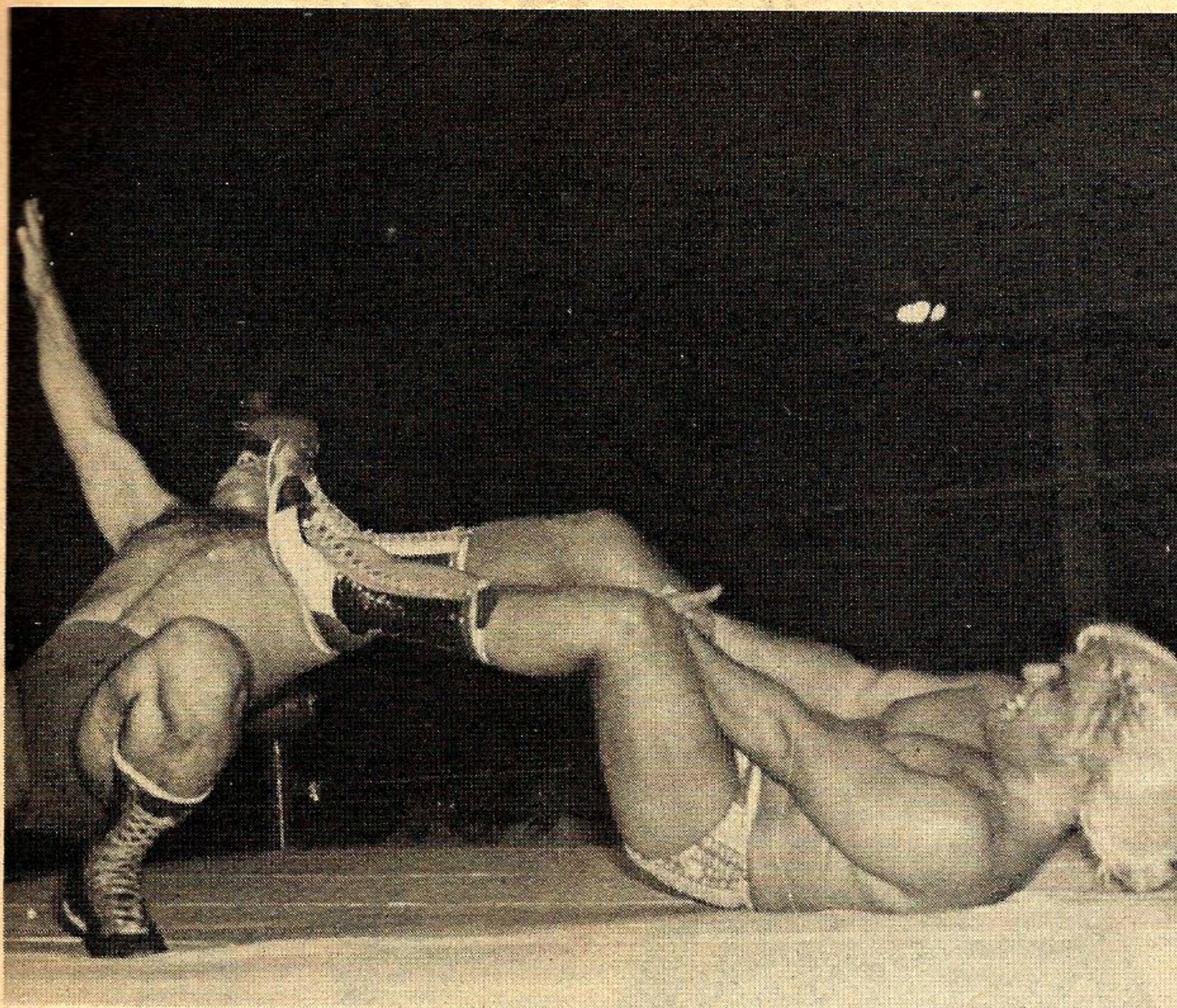
CONGRATULATIONS

I must congratulate you on the excellent feature, "The Complete Life Story of a Living Legend" (THE WRESTLER/October 1975).

I found the story of Bruno Sammartino's childhood very heartbreaking. He must have gone through living hell during the war. It is really a shame his brothers and sisters who died couldn't live to see their brother Bruno today. They sure would be proud of him, just as his many loyal fans are.

When Bruno announces his retirement, he will again find the arena silent, just like the night he lost the belt to Koloff. We all love Bruno and don't want to see him leave.

DARNELL SCHLOTT
Reading, Pennsylvania



Rick Flair, though a relative youngster in the sport of wrestling, is still able to torture the great Paul Jones in a great short arm scissors. It is startling successes like this which make Flair both adored and hated by fans. Letters have flooded into this office agreeing that Flair will indeed be the next Buddy Rogers. Flair immodestly contends he'll be greater than Rogers ever was!

WE AND FLAIR BEST

I can really and truly say now that your magazines are the greatness!

Thanks for the story, "Is Rick Flair the Second Coming of Buddy Rogers?" (INSIDE WRESTLING/January 1976). The answer to that question: You're damn right he is!

Also, thanks for putting Rick Flair in the official wrestling ratings. You can sign me a follower of Rick's.

CHARLES THOMAS

Townsville, North Carolina

NEXT CHAMP?

I think Sheik is largely unrecognized.

He's a super wrestler and I really hope he gets another title shot. If he does, there will be a new NWA champion crowned that night.

Here is the new champ's name in realistic adjectives:

S-tupendous

H-onorable

E-xciting

I-deal

K-ing of Wrestling

TOM TONTALA

Conway, Pennsylvania ☐

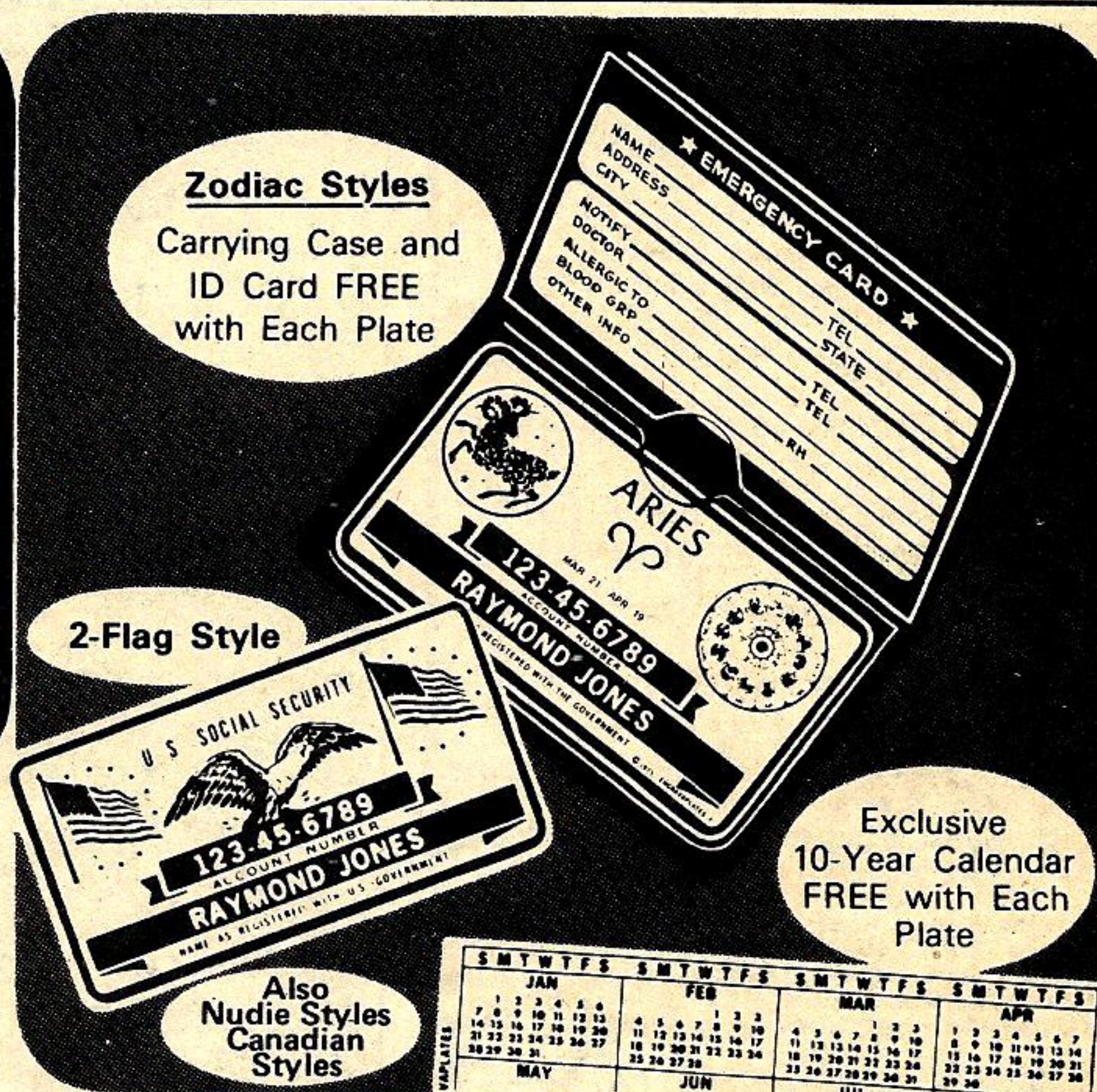
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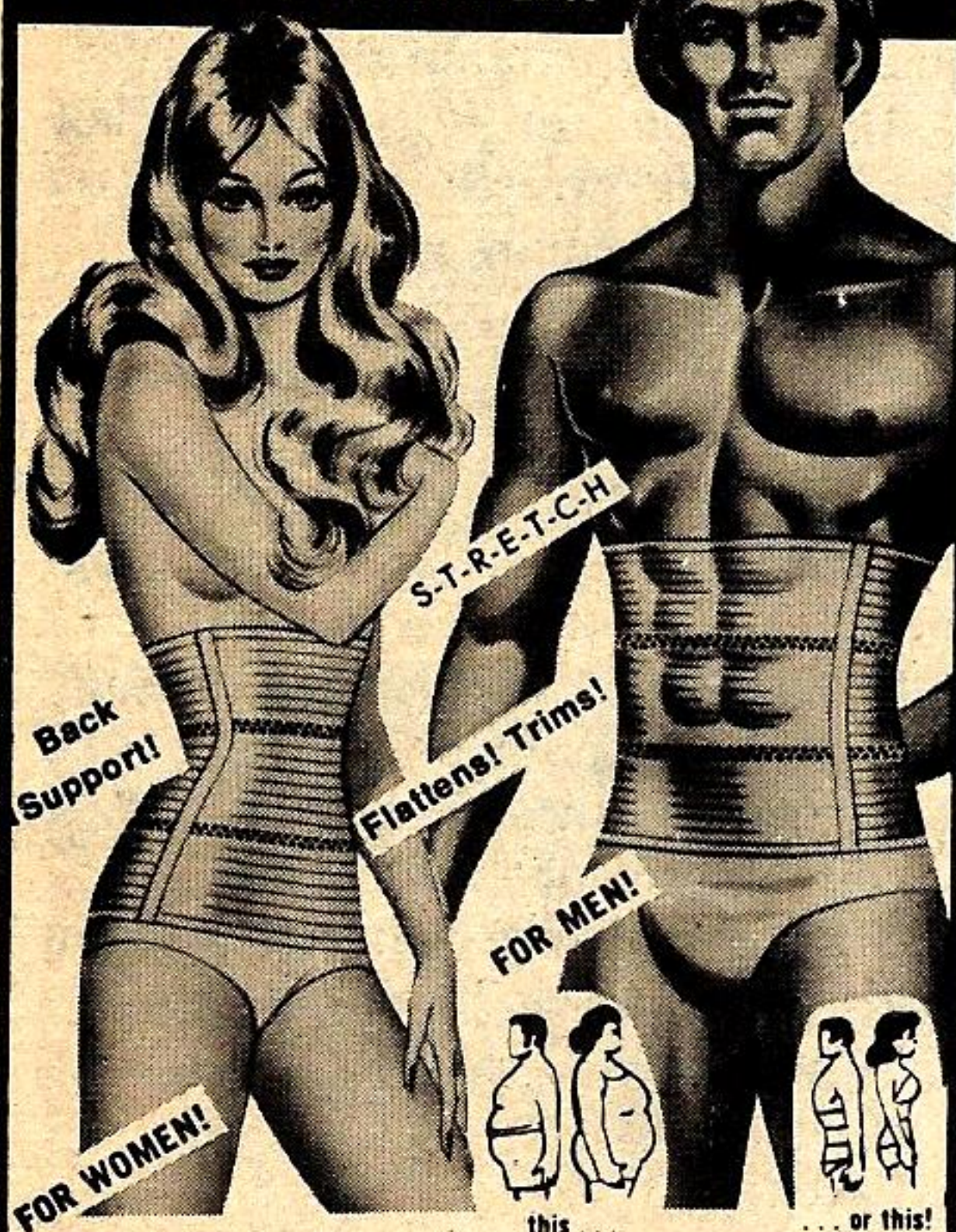
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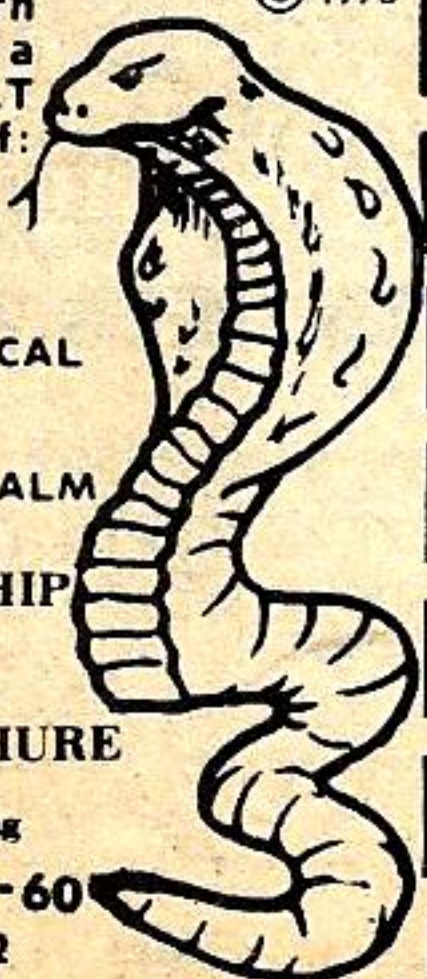
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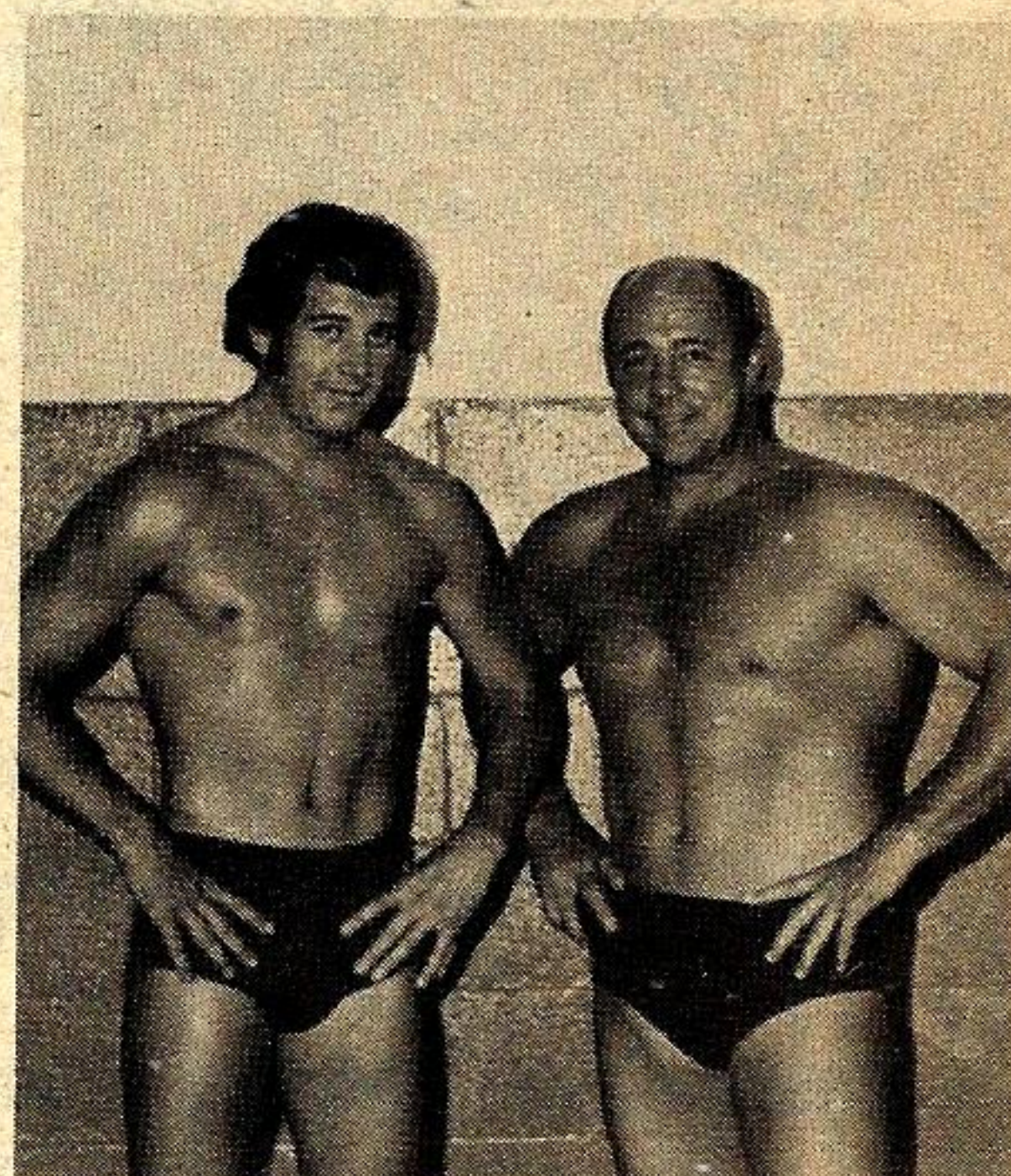
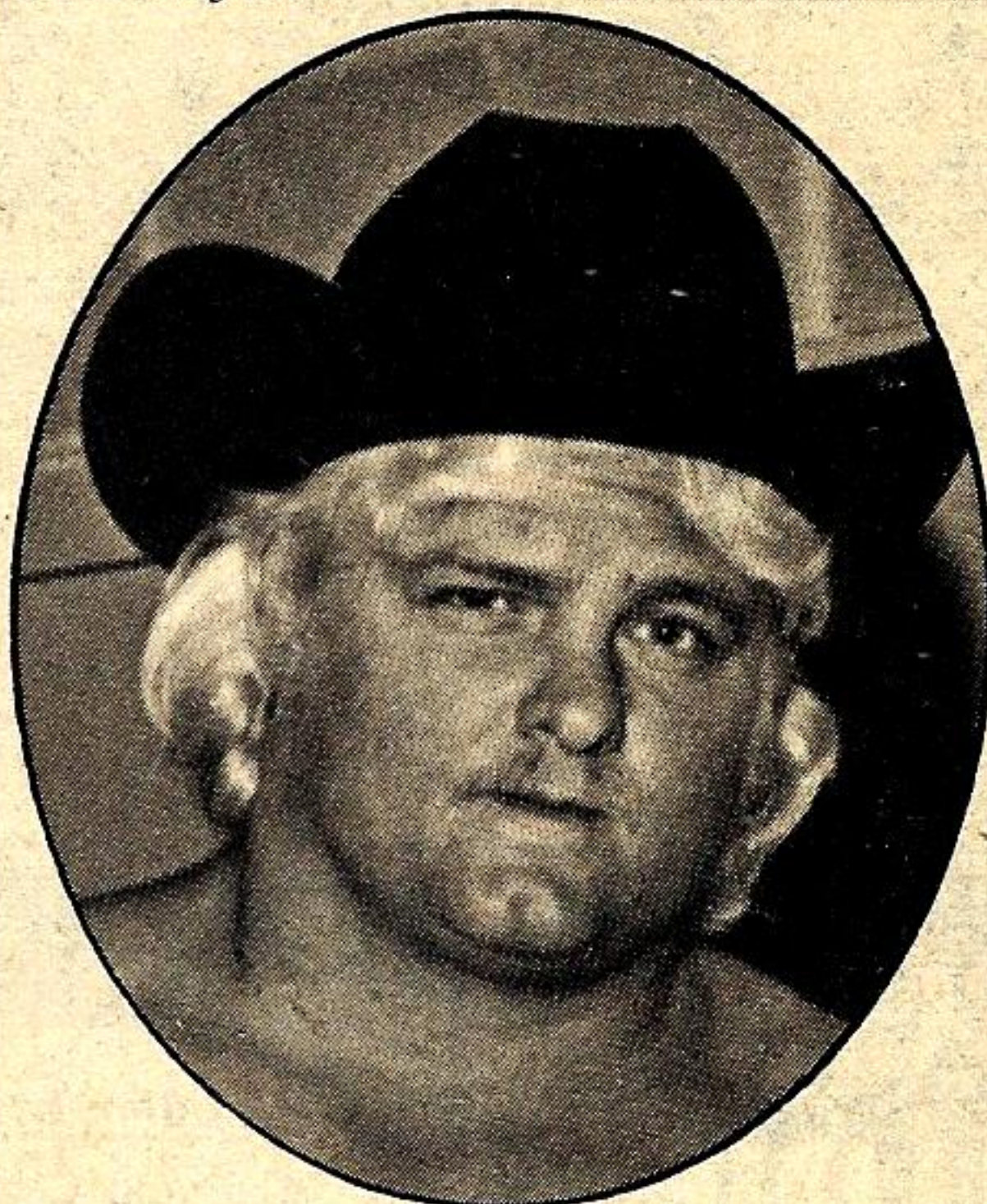
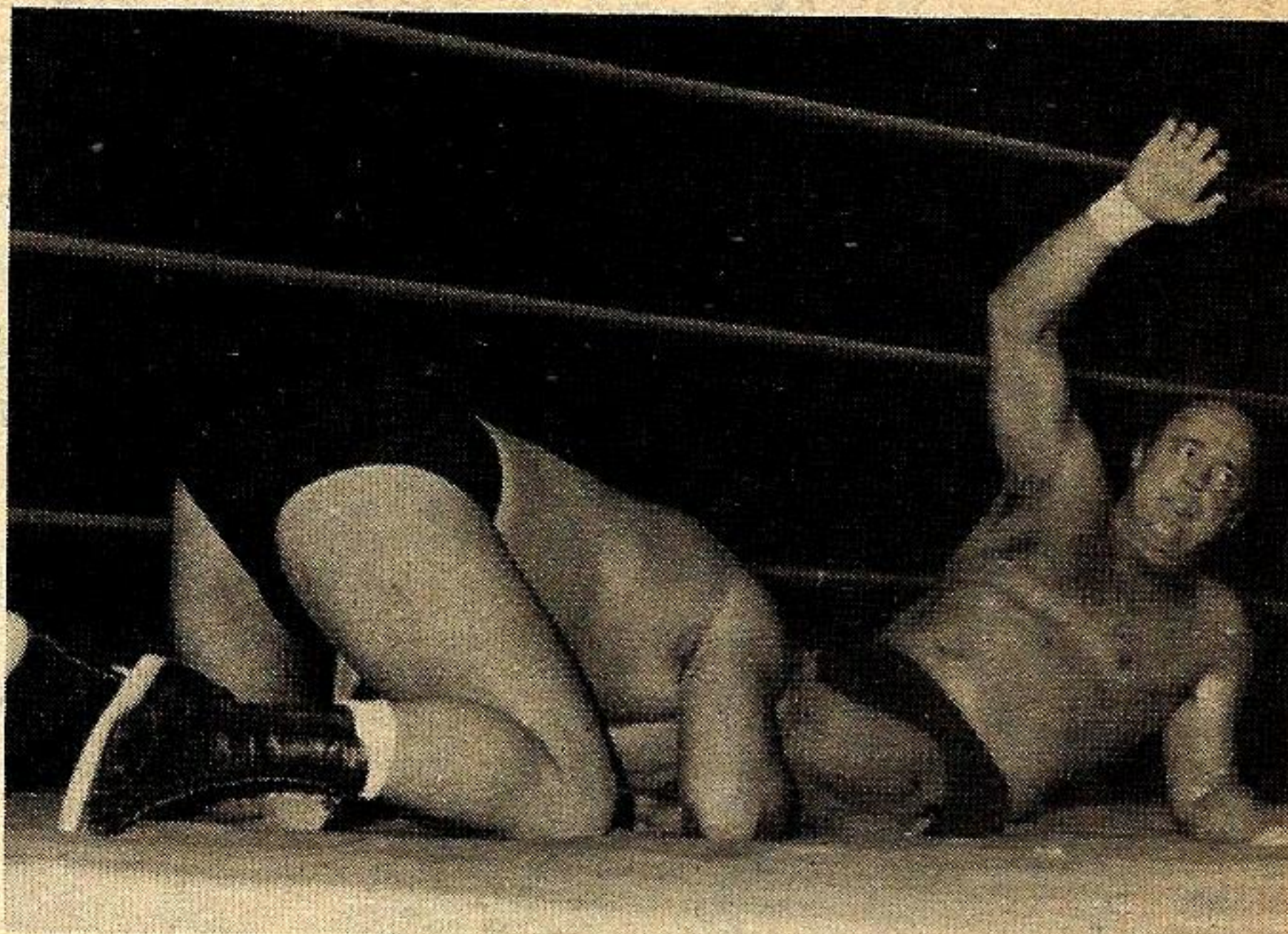


SHOCKING UPSET

(Continued from Page 32)

Right: Verne turns his body to make the headscissors even more painful for Bockwinkle as Nick comes close to submitting for the first fall.

Below right: Greg poses with his father before the match. Below: Is the smile on Bobby Duncum's face due to his decision to interfere?



wrestling. Bockwinkle fell on him instantly and Perschmann awarded him the fall and the title. Greg had been dragged off by Duncum, unable to aid his father.

"Don't worry, dad," Greg reassured his father, "when the films are developed, they'll prove Duncum interfered and the belt will be returned to you."

A little later, Verne learned the bad news. Mysteriously, the film had been destroyed. No record existed of the match.

Despite this setback, Verne traveled to the commissioner's headquarters hoping to reverse the decision. However, it was Verne's word against Bockwinkle and Perschmann's. Duncum didn't even bother making an appearance.

The commissioner had no choice but to take the word of the referee. Even though a case could be made for Perschmann being a renowned rule-breaker and close friend of Bockwinkle, he was still the referee.

The commissioner is obligated to believe his appointed official. Even Gagne had to admit overruling Paul could lead the association to chaos.

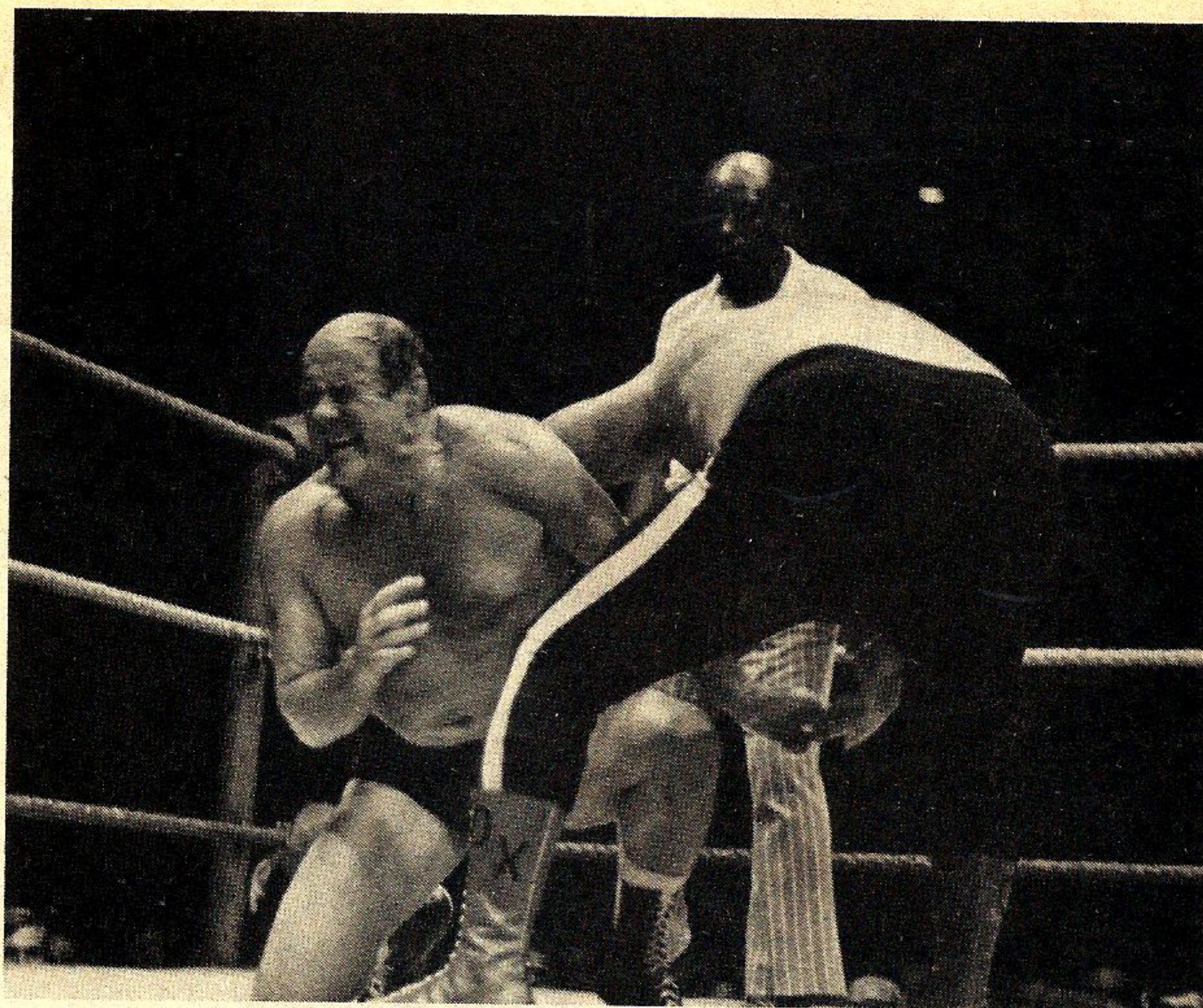
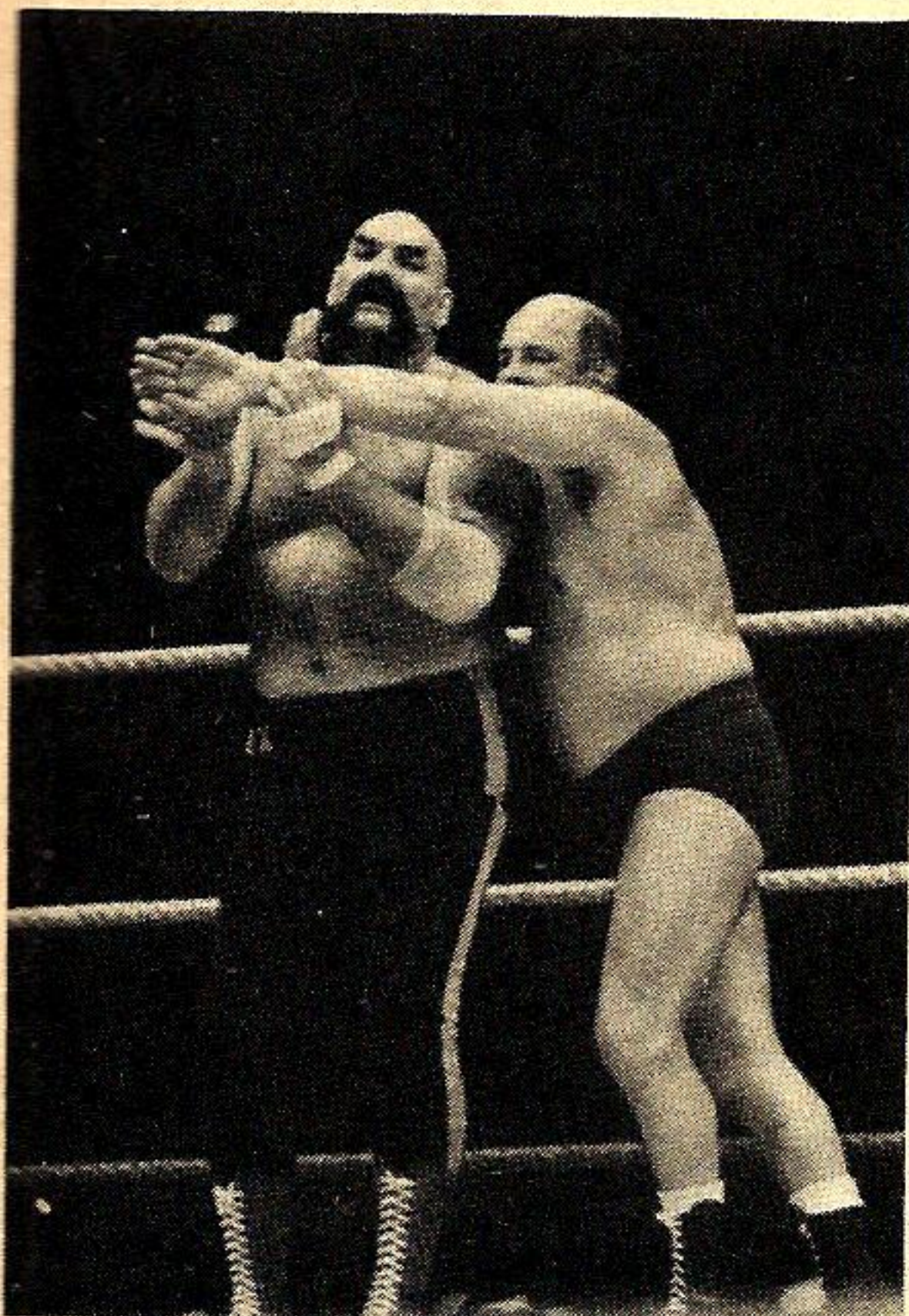
"I thought when I eventually lost the title," Verne said later, "I would be glad to retire. I've been AWA champion a long time and have earned a rest. But I hoped to be beaten honorably—not have the title stolen from me."

"Now I'm dedicated to regaining the title from Nick. Even though there is no return clause in the contract, forcing the rematch, I'll wait until he gives me a chance to get the title back. I want that belt back more than anything else in the world."

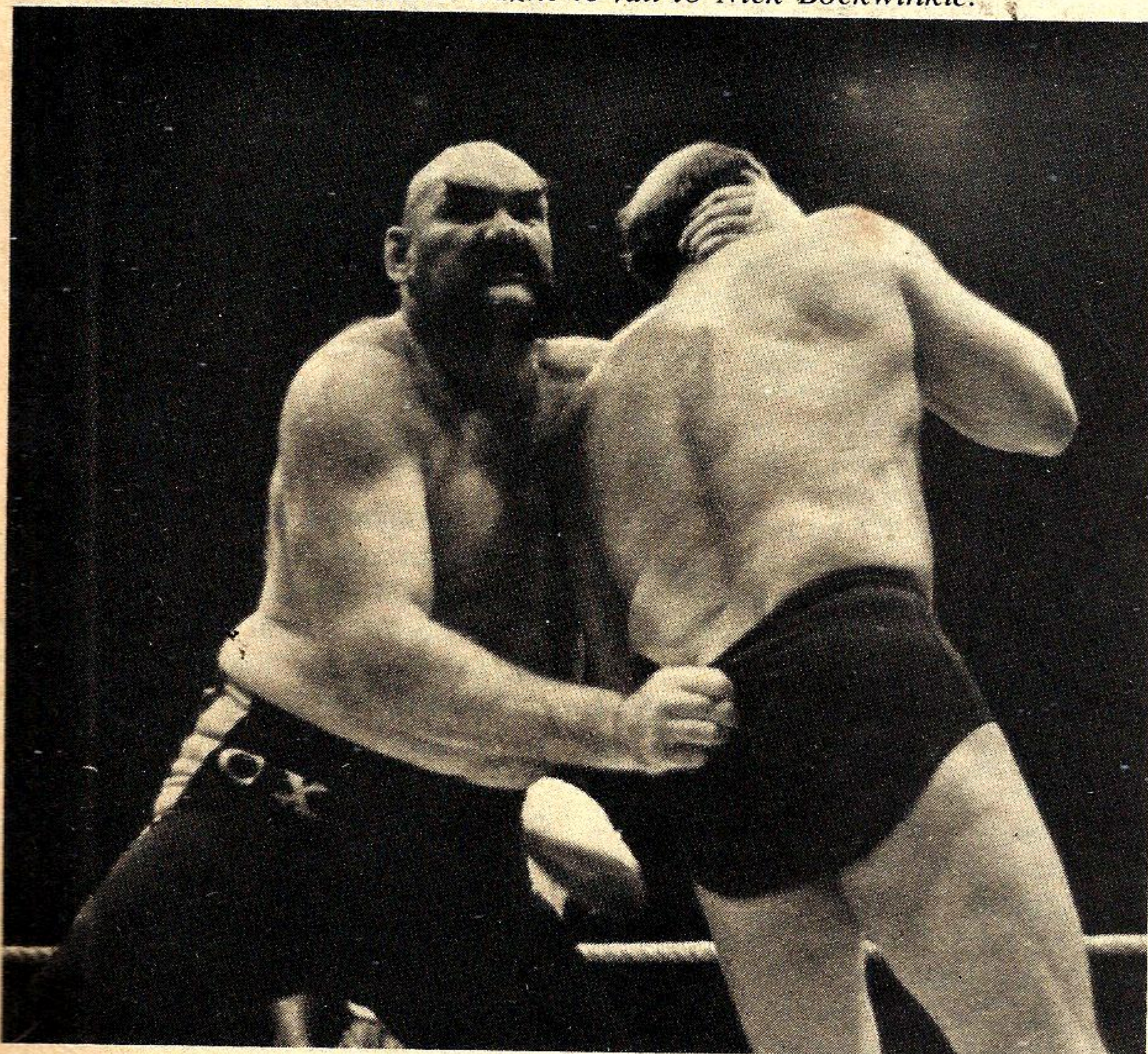
A tragedy of errors has occurred to take the belt from Verne Gagne. Can he overcome this conspiracy and bad luck? In his long career, Verne has pulled off many upsets, overcoming great odds. Now, he may be faced with the greatest challenge of his career. Only time will tell whether he can once again emerge victorious. □

Ox Baker

(Continued from Page 33)



Baker claims he irreparably damaged the muscles in Verne's left arm (above right and above left) during the match; only one of many injuries from which Gagne will never recover. Baker also says he permanently dislodged some of Verne's vertebrae while he worked on the then AWA champion's neck (below). According to Baker, this is what caused Gagne to fall to Nick Bockwinkel.



referee, cooked up some moronic rule, known only to himself, and disqualified me. Disqualified! The only thing I did wrong was beat that garbagepicker's mealticket.

Every time I think of that dumb ruling, my blood boils. That referee

had the nerve to say I used a foreign object. A foreign object! The only thing I possessed Gagne didn't was talent! How come the ref never produced the foreign object after the match? What did I do with the plastic knife, eat it?

Gagne would still be champion, and Bockwinkel would have been disqualified, if Paul Perschmann hadn't been the referee in their match. Paul is too honest a man to take a bribe from a slimy louse like Gagne. He called the match as he saw it, not as Gagne wanted it to be called. Bockwinkel won fair and square in the first honest AWA title match in years.

But Bockwinkel won because of me. After meeting the great Ox Baker, Gagne was finished. I could tell his muscles took too great a beating for him to ever wrestle well again. His next match against Bockwinkel proved that!

What's more, I made Gagne a coward. Look in his eyes next time he wrestles. The fear fills up his eyes. The man had developed ticks since I wrestled him. His nerves are shot; he can barely stand. His hands shake too badly for him to lift a glass of water without spilling it all over himself.

I destroyed Verne Gagne. Chances are he'll never wrestle me again. I know he'll never be champion again. The man is a failure, a has-been that never was. All the money in the world won't be able to buy back his championship.

I've got nothing against Nick Bockwinkel. He'll make a great champion. He's a great wrestler. But he didn't earn the championship. I did! Ox Baker finished Verne Gagne! Ox Baker is the real AWA champion!

That is the truth of the matter. I don't expect to get the championship belt. I just want the truth to be known.

□

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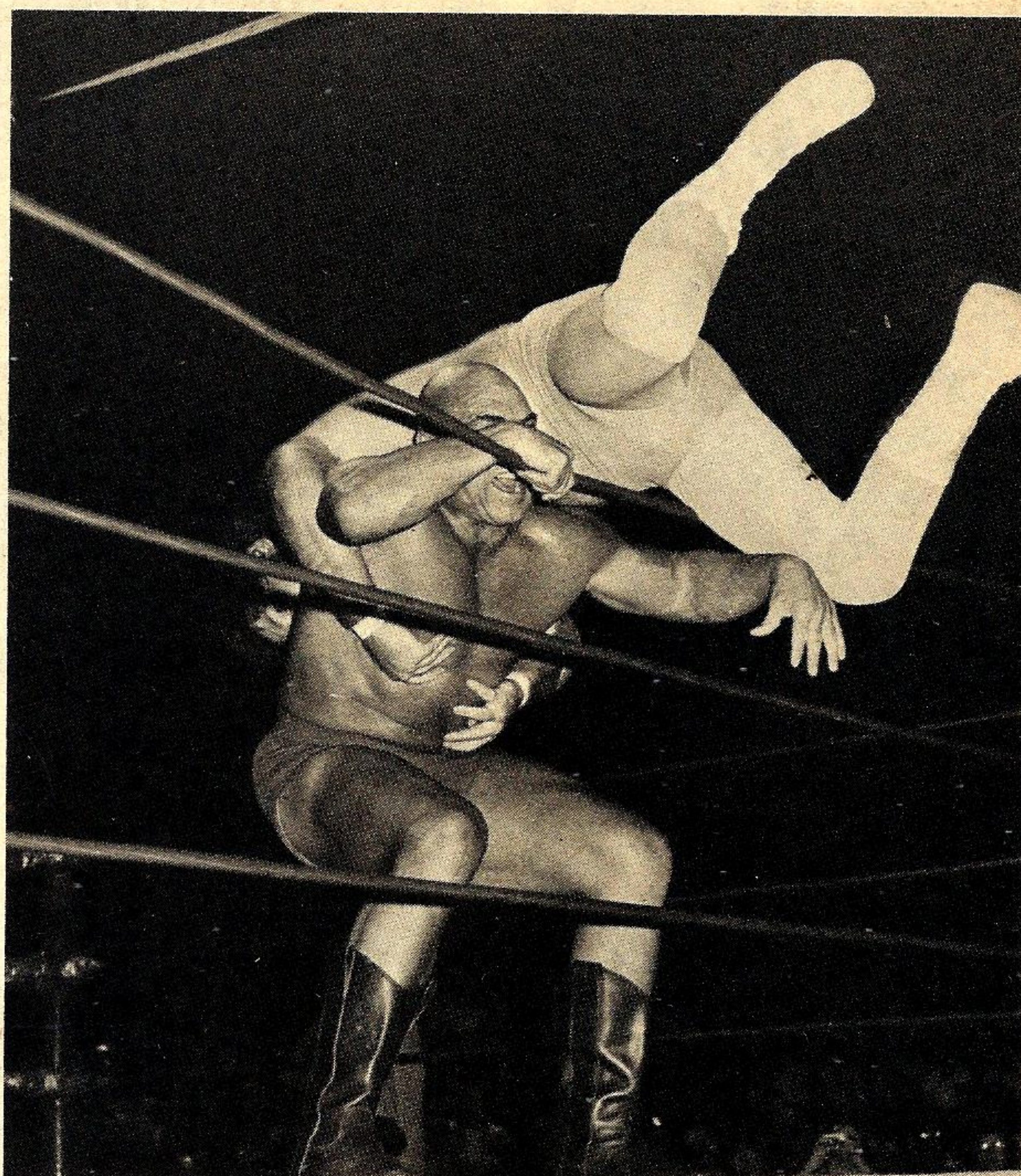
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JERRY LAWLER

(Continued from Page 25)



Jerry leaps over the ropes and grabs Mongolian Stomper. One look at Stomper's face reveals the pain inflicted by Jerry barreling into him. Many opponents have felt the same agony; Lawler's ugly record for crippling opponents in matches is long and terrifying!

arena. They know I go for broke and they are scared. Violence is a major portion of this sport; it is just a bigger part for me than for most. And my opponents know this.

"The risks I face aren't all that big—for me. I'm so talented I can go on years after others would be reduced to vegetables. Even if I could wrestle half as well as I do now, I would still be the best around.

"I've just decided to go further than any of my opponents. This is why I'm the best. Can't be best without taking risks. It's a decision I made when I first started wrestling and nothing has come along to change my mind."

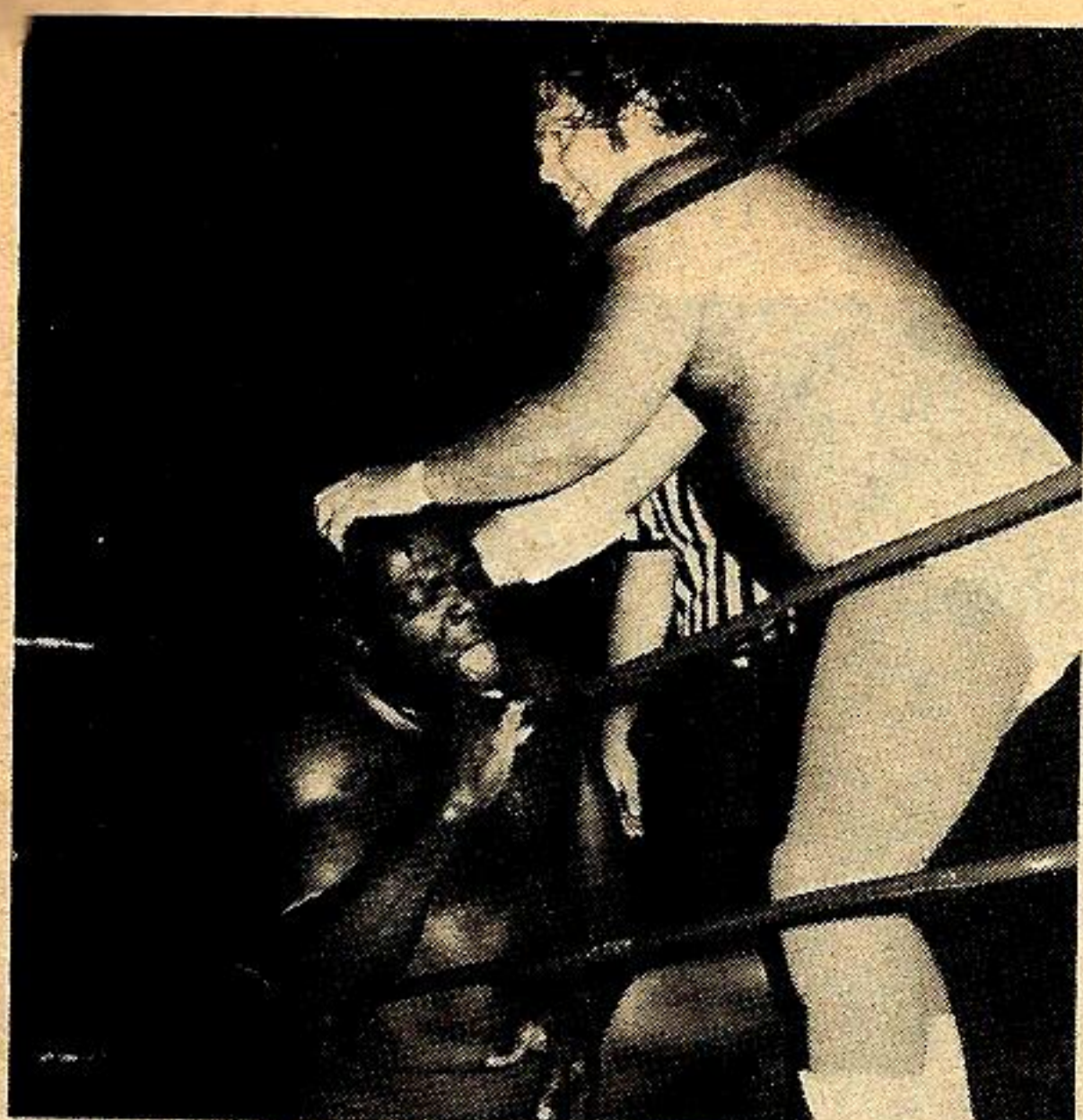
While his opponents acknowledge his risks, they are less than flattering in talking about them.

"Lawler has to take wild risks," Bob Armstrong contends, "because he isn't

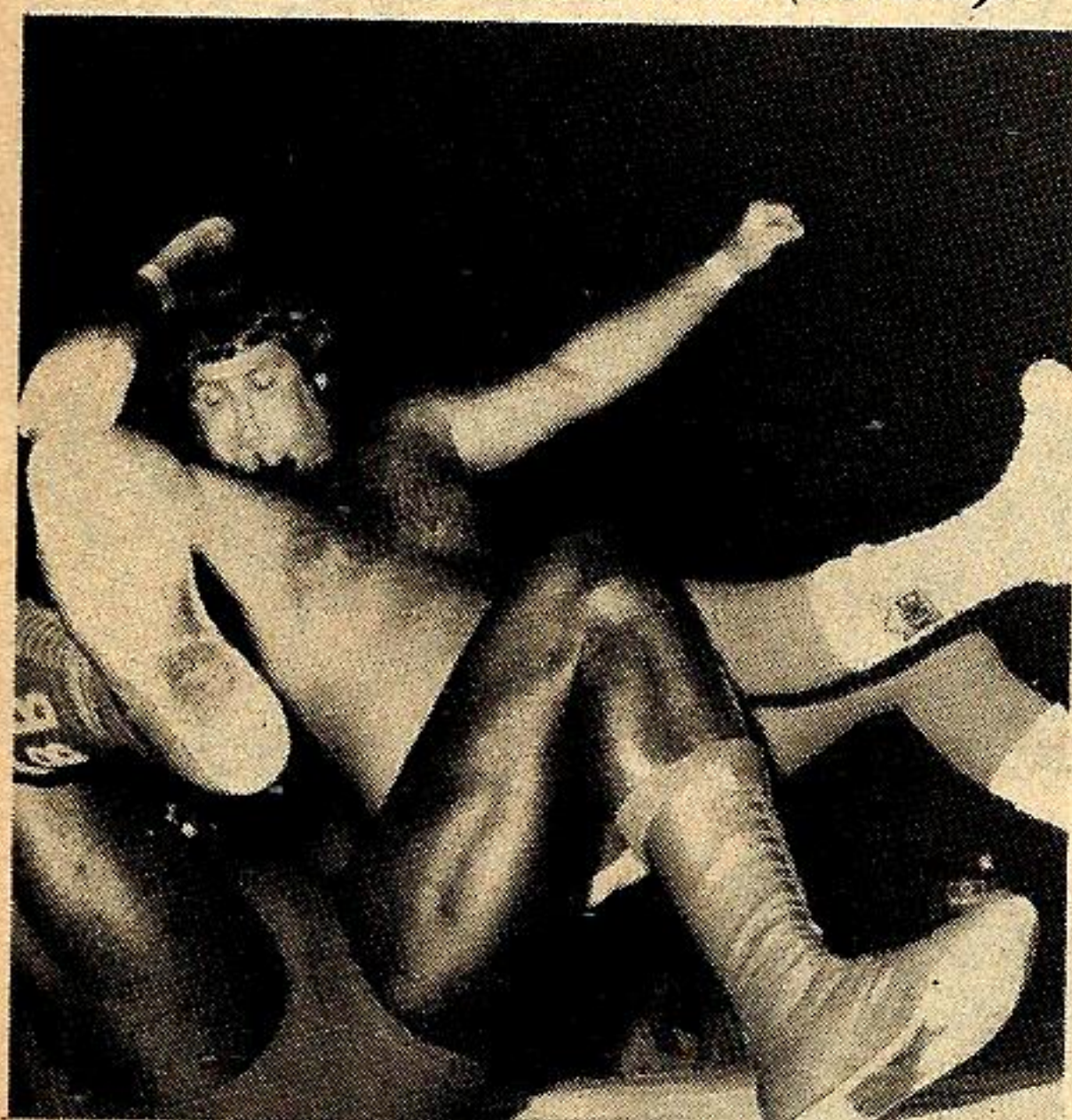
good enough to wrestle intelligently. He substitutes violence for skill. If he can't master the maneuvers for a pin, he substitutes talent with cutting the guy too badly for him to continue. He needs to be rough and dirty; he would be a failure as a scientific wrestler."

Some of Jerry's friends who think he is a great wrestler, fear he secretly agrees with Armstrong. They think Jerry is afraid he has to go beyond safety to succeed. Lawler may have no real idea about what being an excellent athlete really is.

These same friends point to Jerry's outrageous bragging as a sign of his insecurity. They see him as afraid to admit an opponent may actually be a worthy adversary. He must maintain his always violent posture to scare his competitors. Jerry doesn't realize he would be a fearsome opponent if he



Bobo Brazil is one of many foes to whom Lawler has shown no mercy. Jerry brutalizes Bobo by pounding his victim's head into the turnbuckle (above); then when Brazil is near senselessness, Jerry slams his elbow into Bobo's neck (below).



never said a word and wrestled scientifically.

Some of these friends have told Lawler their beliefs. To them he has screamed insults until they were forced to remain silent. He is terrified of even discussing the possibility.

Unless Jerry Lawler wrestles less violently, he cannot remain a wrestler much longer. Sooner or later, his body will exact payment for the brutality it has been forced to endure. The price demanded will be the end of his career.

However, there is little chance Lawler will cease his savage way of life. He refuses to even discuss the possibility, preferring to make outlandish claims about his greatness. Those who know him best fear for him most.

"I'll keep going," Jerry says, "until I drop. They'll have to carry me out of the arena a cripple before I'll even consider retiring."

That day may be dangerously close. And Jerry Lawler will have no one to blame but himself. ☐

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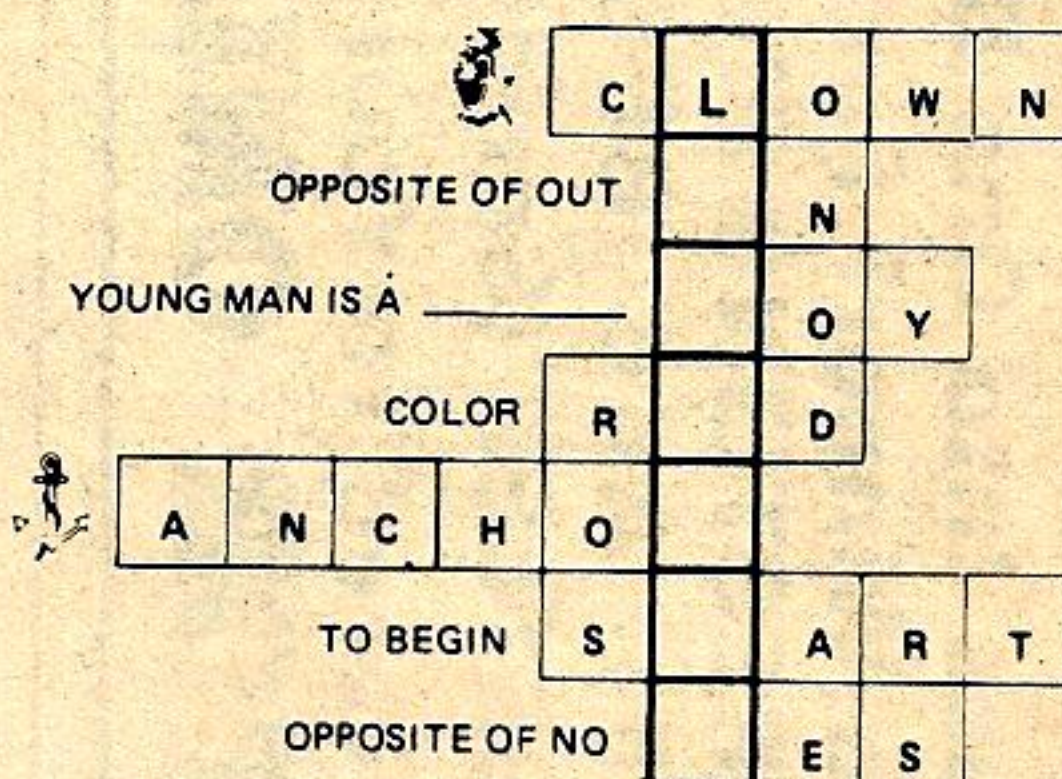


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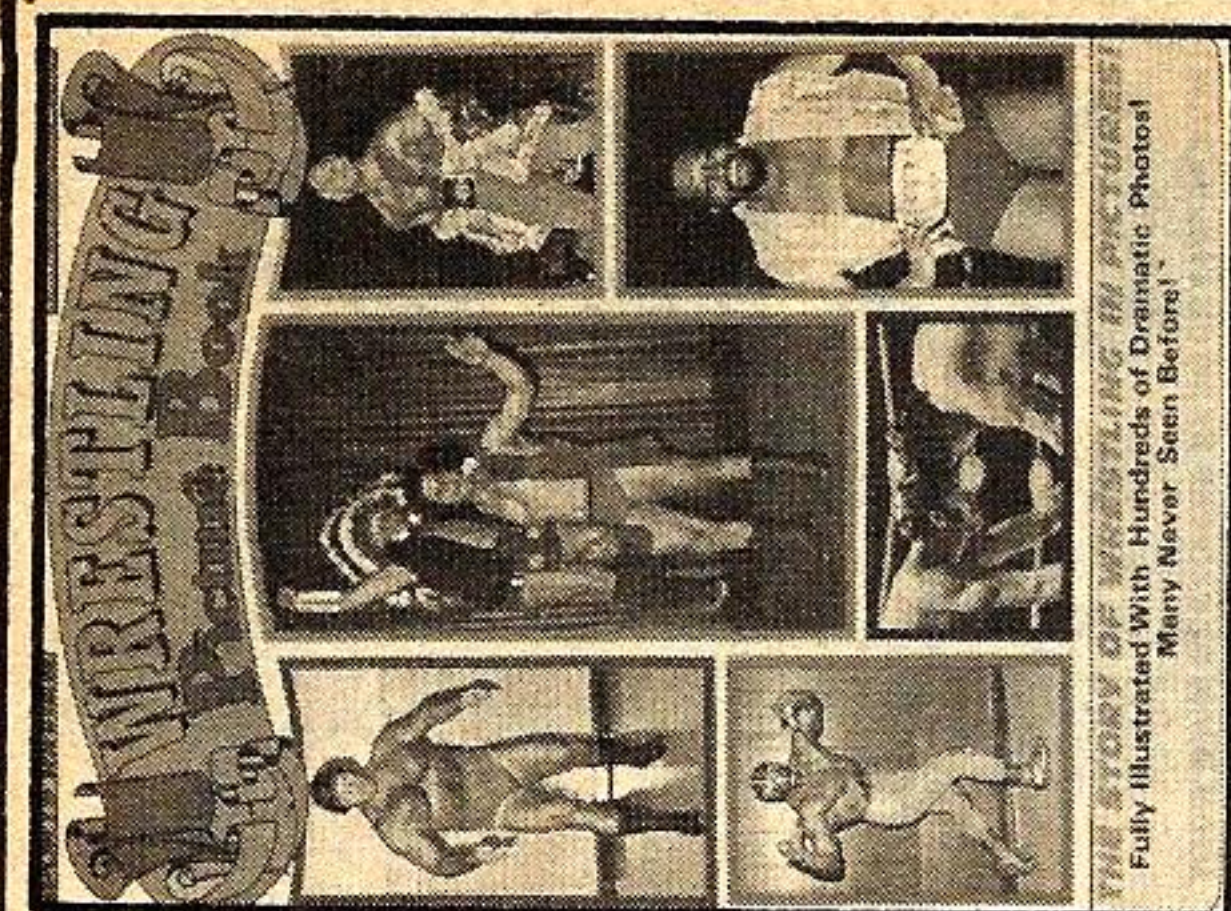
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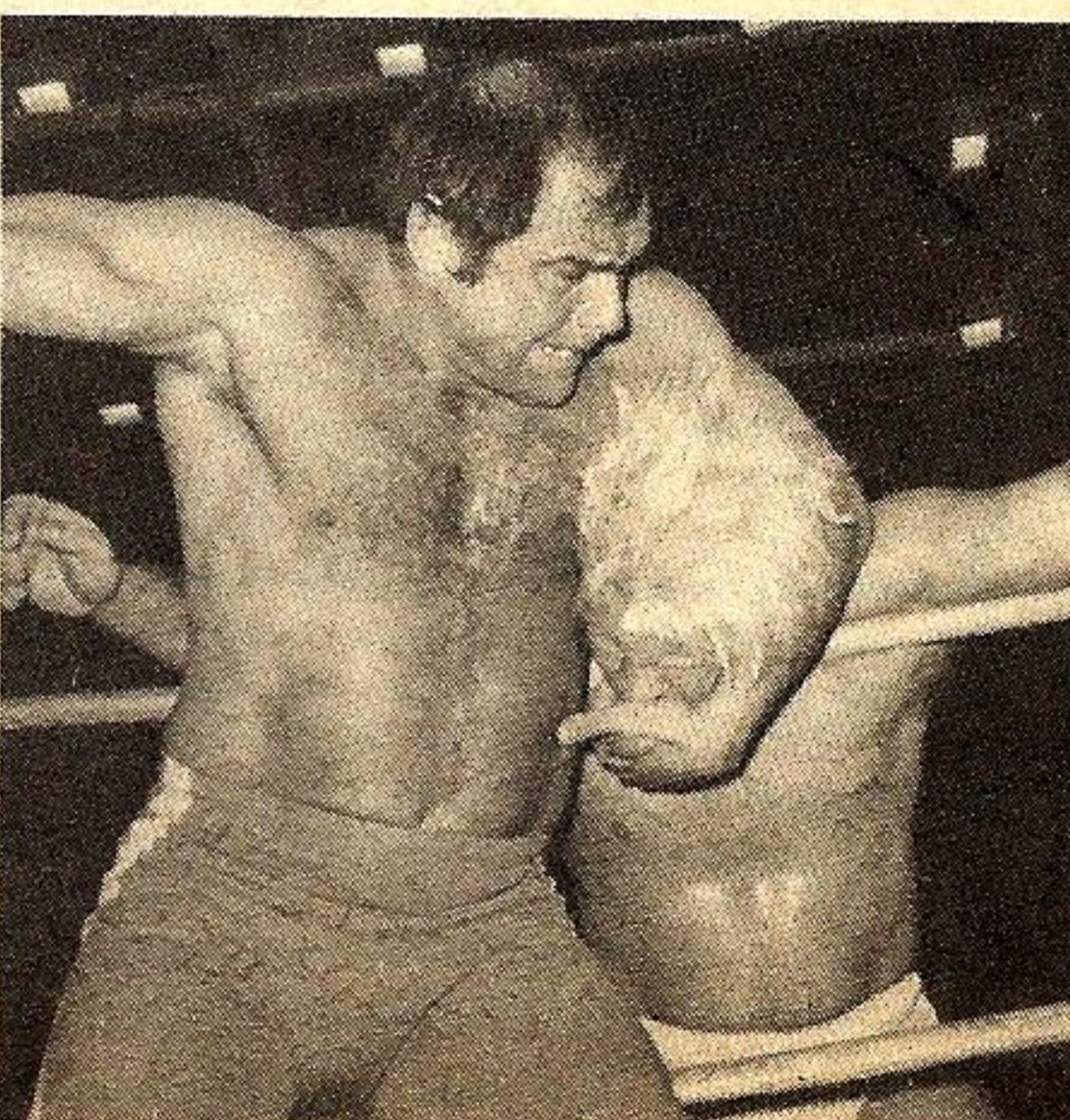
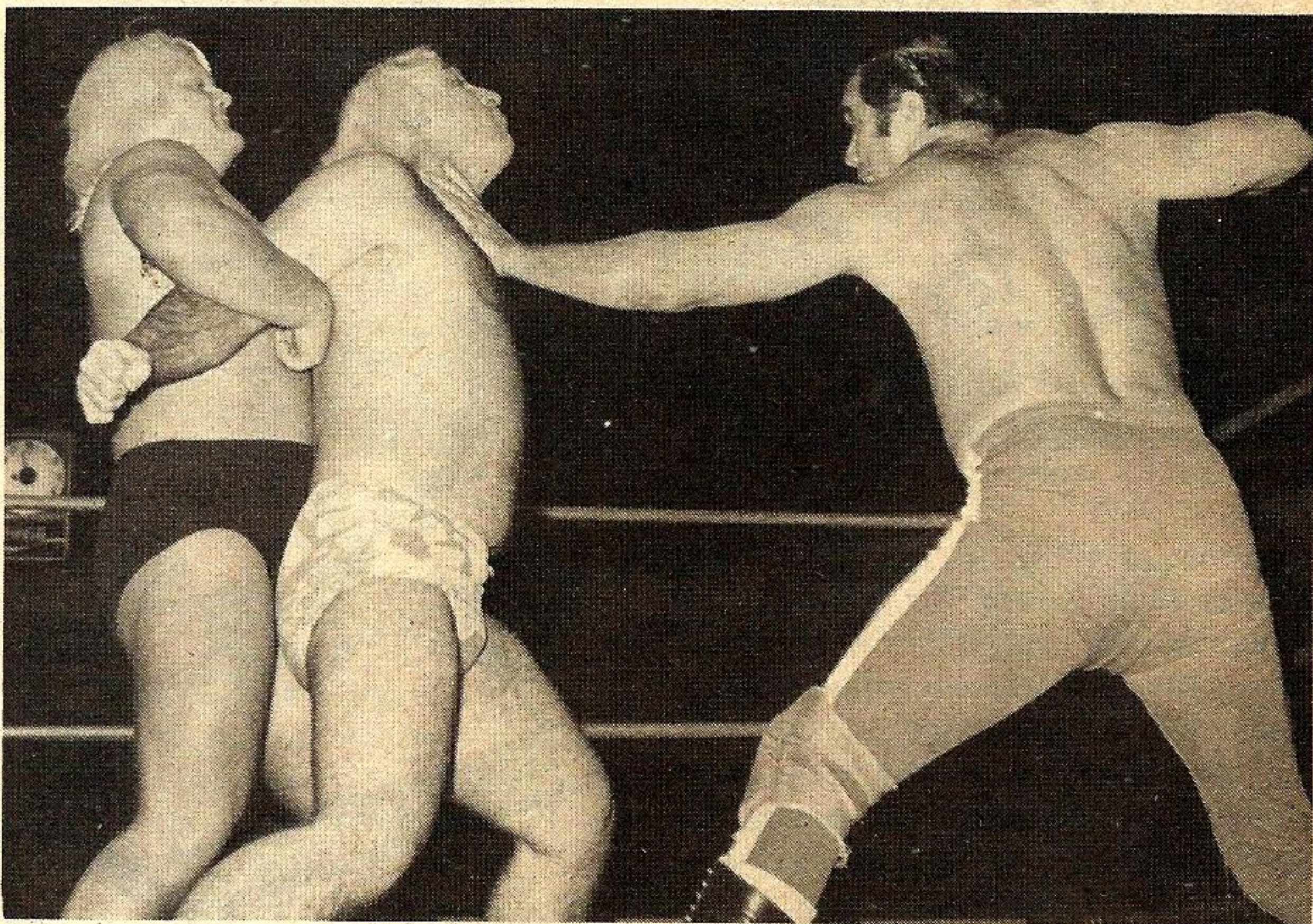
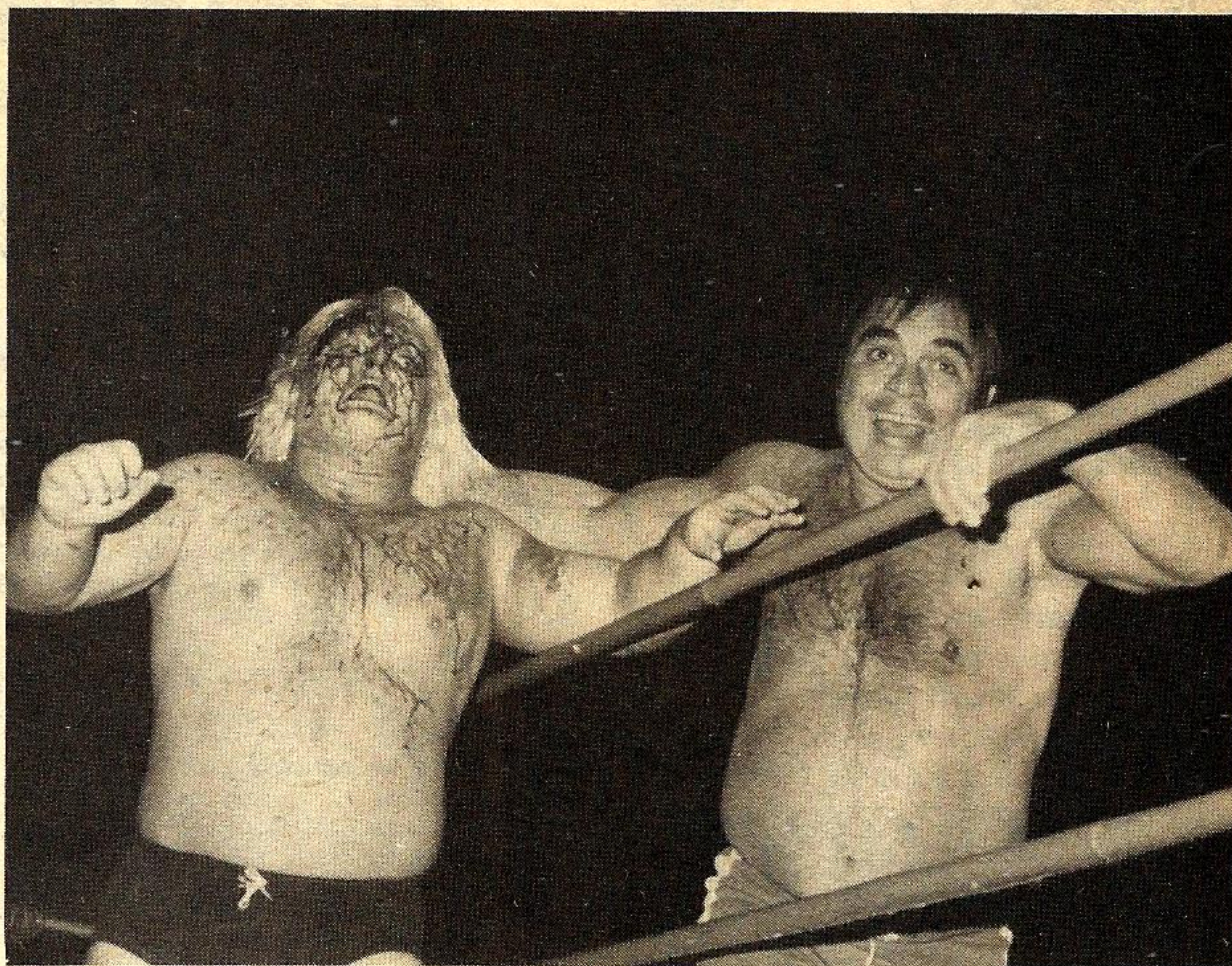
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JOHN TOLOS

(Continued from Page 31)



*During a tag team match against
 the Hollywood Blonds, Tolos is
 preparing to punch Jerry Brown
 (above) but hits Greg Valentine
 instead. This starts a feud
 between them (top and left).*

made up of two different
 personalities, a strong, emotion-
 less self and a weaker, more feeling
 person. For a person to be emotion-
 ally stable, these two selves must
 work in harmony, not conflict. A
 stable person should be the
 combination of the two personali-
 ties. An unbalanced person is one

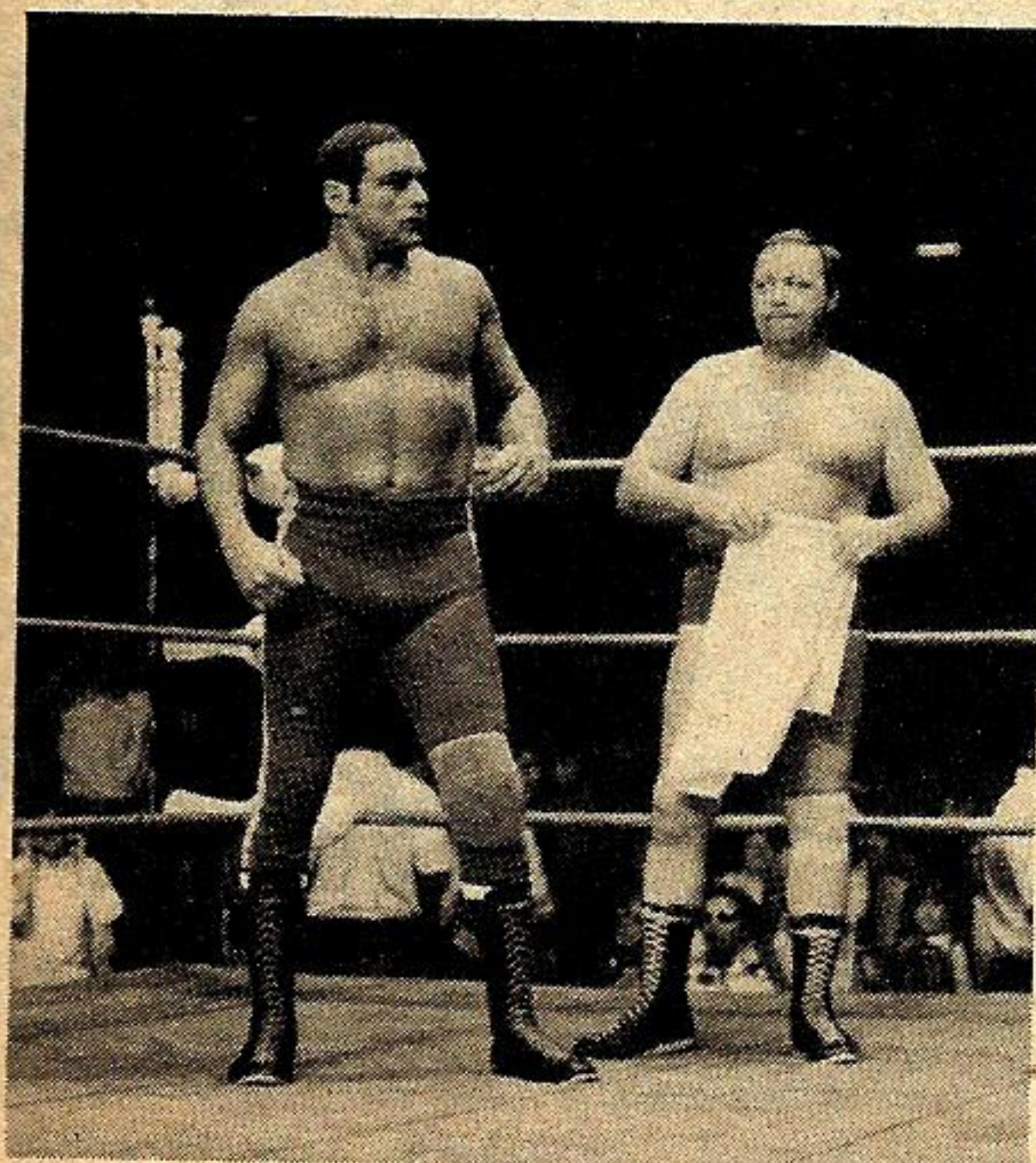
whose two selves appear in alternate times.

This is John's problem.

His strong side is the one wishing victory at any price. His other side is the one craving acceptance.

At various times, John's weaker side surfaces. Therefore, he craves the cheering crowds and feels pressured internally to wrestle scientifically. On other occasions, his stronger side surfaces. He feels the compulsion to win.

And so, if John is to ever find inner peace, he must resolve the conflict between his strong and weak selves.



Louis Tillet joins John as he wages war against the Hollywood Blonds and Greg Valentine in a series of bloody, brutal brawls.

"I think my problems really come to a head whenever I wrestle with someone as a tag team," said John. "When I teamed with Louis Tillet, I had a real problem—one night we would work well together because I wanted to wrestle scientifically. The next night, all that would matter to me is to win. Then I would start trying to take all the action from Louis. He got sore at me, and we would start battling among ourselves. This is not the way to build a good tag team. I just can't help it.

"Somehow, this has to stop. I want to be the greatest wrestler to ever enter an arena. I know I can be. I want to win. But I also want to hear the fans cheer."

And so John's problems continue. If he really is to achieve greatness, he must resolve his inner conflict and be at peace with himself. Until such time, he will continue to change from good guy to bad guy, searching for inner peace and contentment. □

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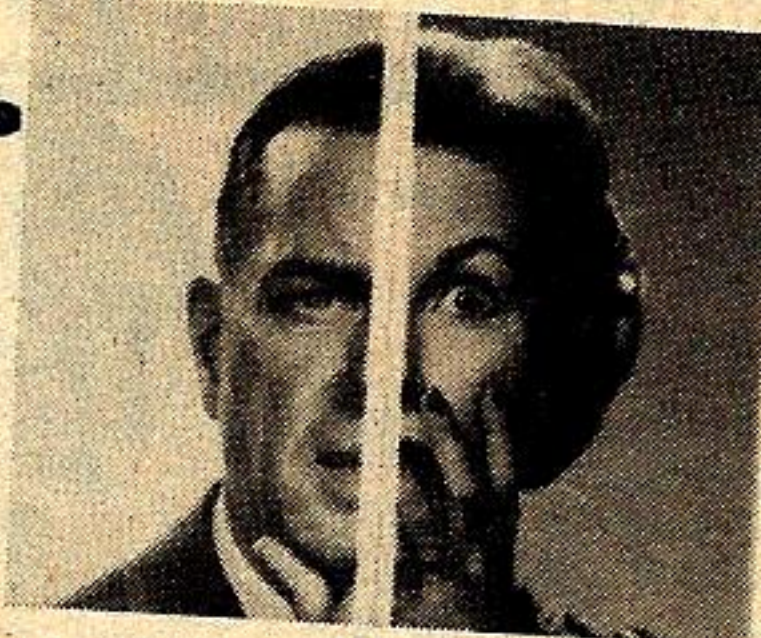
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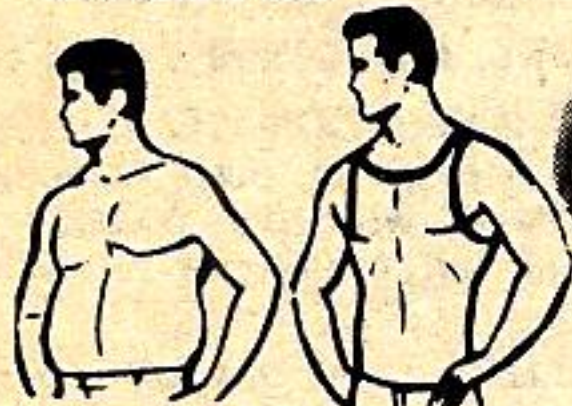
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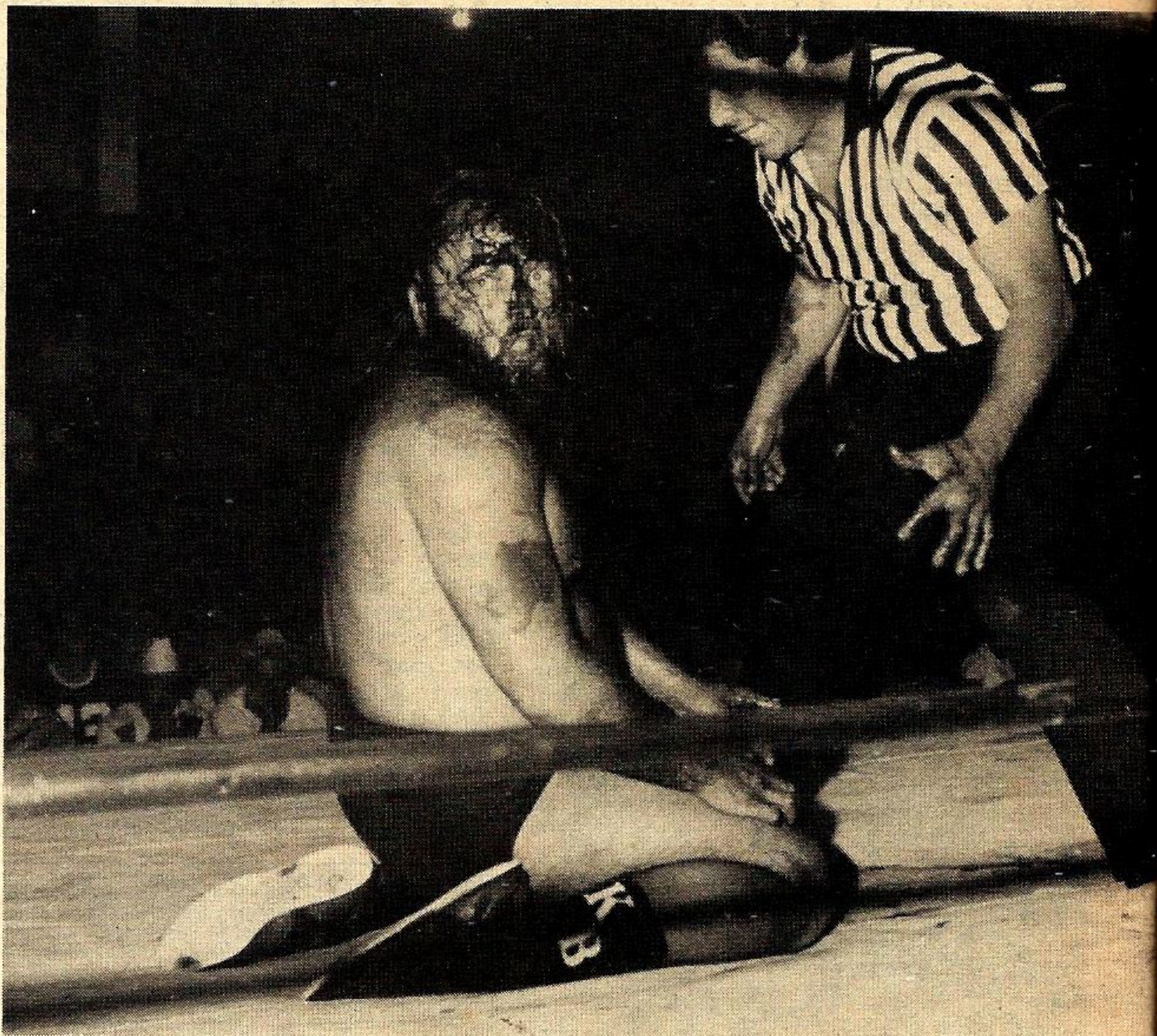
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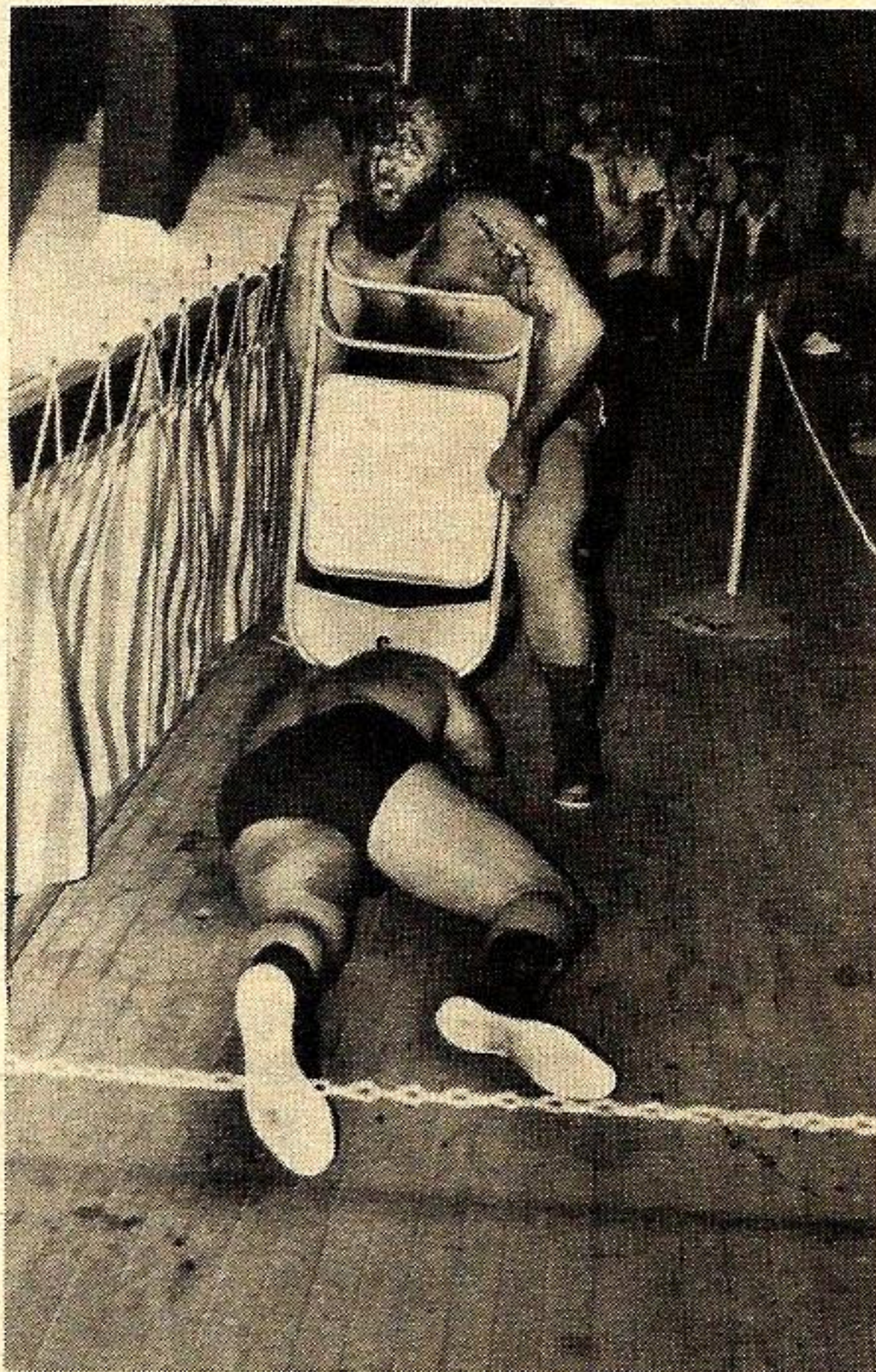
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MOST SAVAGE RIVALRY

(Continued from Page 39)



Above: The two bleeding and battered grapplers try to rise to their feet. Left: Brooks smashes Vachon with a chair!



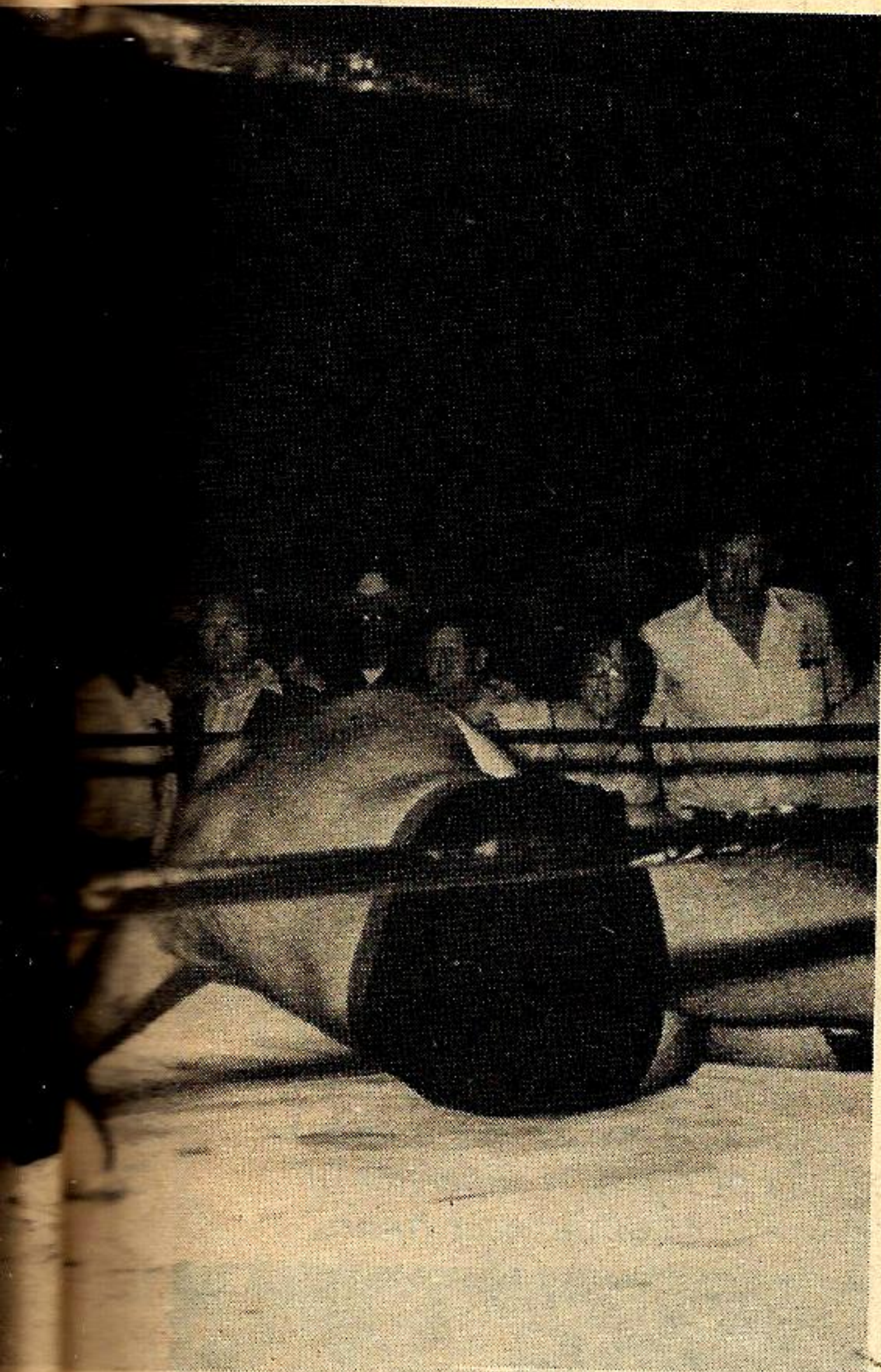
overwhelmed by the savagery, left the arena. Their stomachs could no longer stand the spectacle.

Neither wrestler was bothered, however. Even though blood soon obscured every feature on Vachon's face except his burning eyes, Mad Dog appeared to relish the contest. All present will remember Vachon's ghoulish laughter before his teeth sank into the flesh of his foe's forehead. Both men spent most of the match wearing masks of blood.

After brawling for five minutes, Brooks managed to slam Vachon hard into the turnbuckle. Mad Dog's legs turned rubbery. His eyes grew glassy. He stumbled across the canvas, desperately trying to keep away from Killer. Even the groggy Vachon knew what would happen when Brooks sensed victory.

Mad Dog watched Brooks rush toward him like a bloody missile. At the last moment, Vachon leaped over the ropes and into the crowd. Those assuming he was running

start, spectators realized their predictions had been conservative. It resembled a brawl rather than a wrestling match, the ugliest kind of brawl between bitter enemies. The crowd was oddly silent as it watched the two men in combat. This bout contained ferocity which stunned rather than excited. Many,



back to the dressing room did not know Mad Dog Vachon!

Mad Dog fled only to return with a metal chair. In the hands of this grappler a chair can be a lethal weapon! His illegal expertise was quickly demonstrated against Brooks. New and wider gashes opened up across Killer's head.

It looked like the end for Brooks until he ducked under a swing of the chair and latched onto Vachon's arm. Before Mad Dog knew what happened, he was again slammed into the turnbuckle. Blood gushed from open gashes, staining the canvas bright scarlet. Only a miracle could save Mad Dog now and there were no miracles to be had. So Vachon did the next best thing.

Mad Dog slugged the referee, not hard enough to knock the man senseless but just enough to insure a disqualification. Within seconds, the referee was more than glad to oblige Vachon.

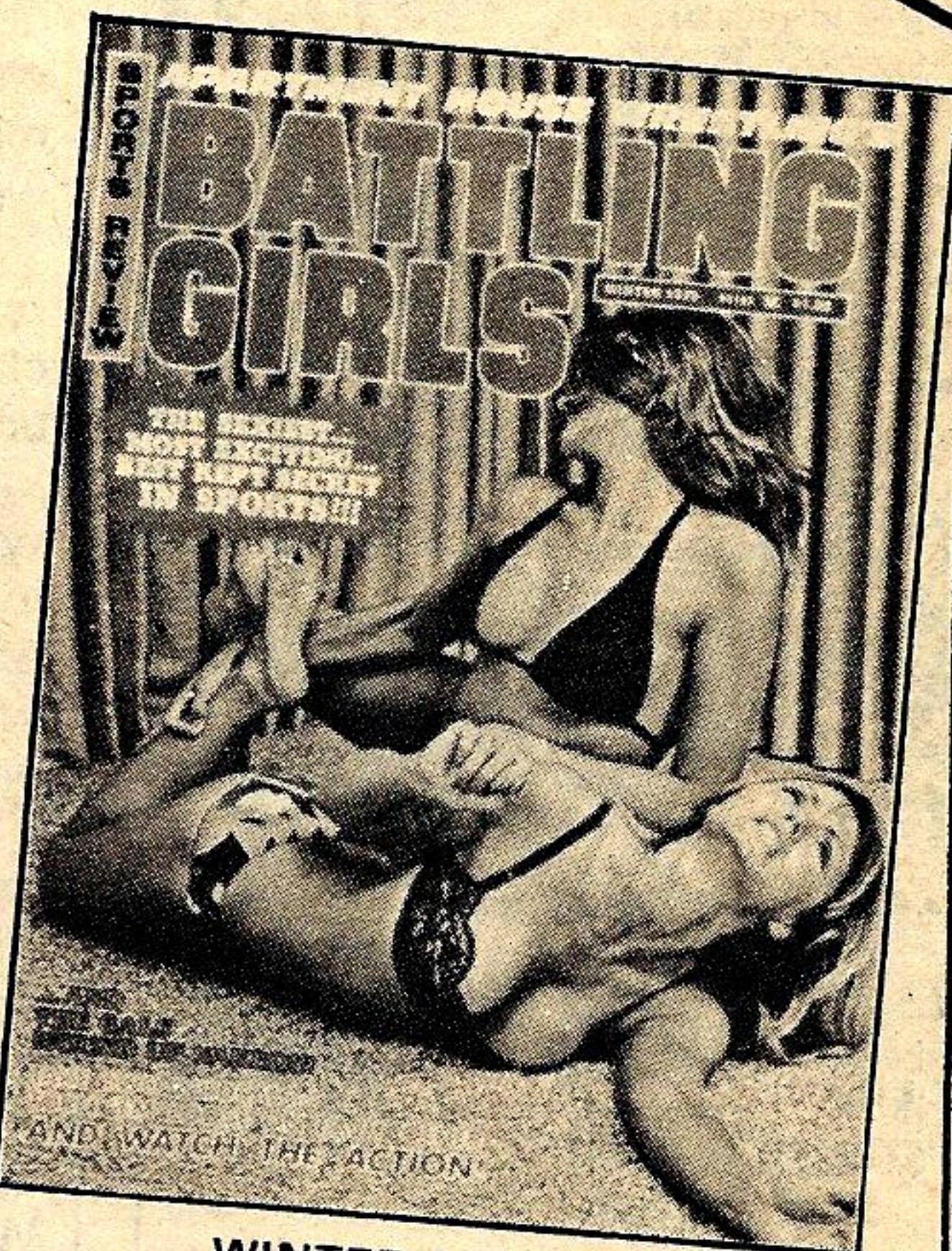
Though the match ended, the feud is far from over. Again and again, these two men will meet and wage war against each other. And each time, the spectre of death will hang anxiously over the arena. □

BATTLING GIRLS

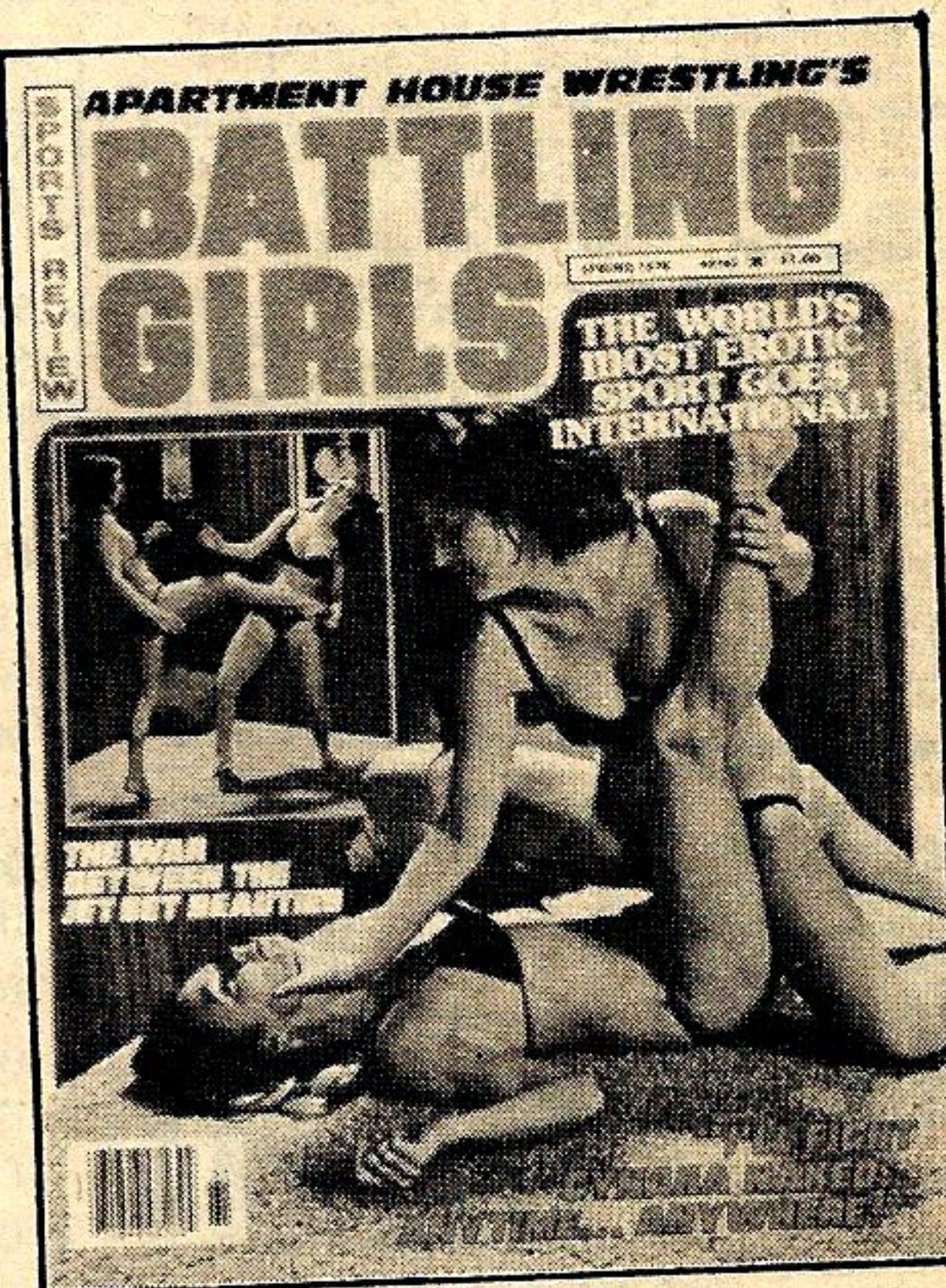
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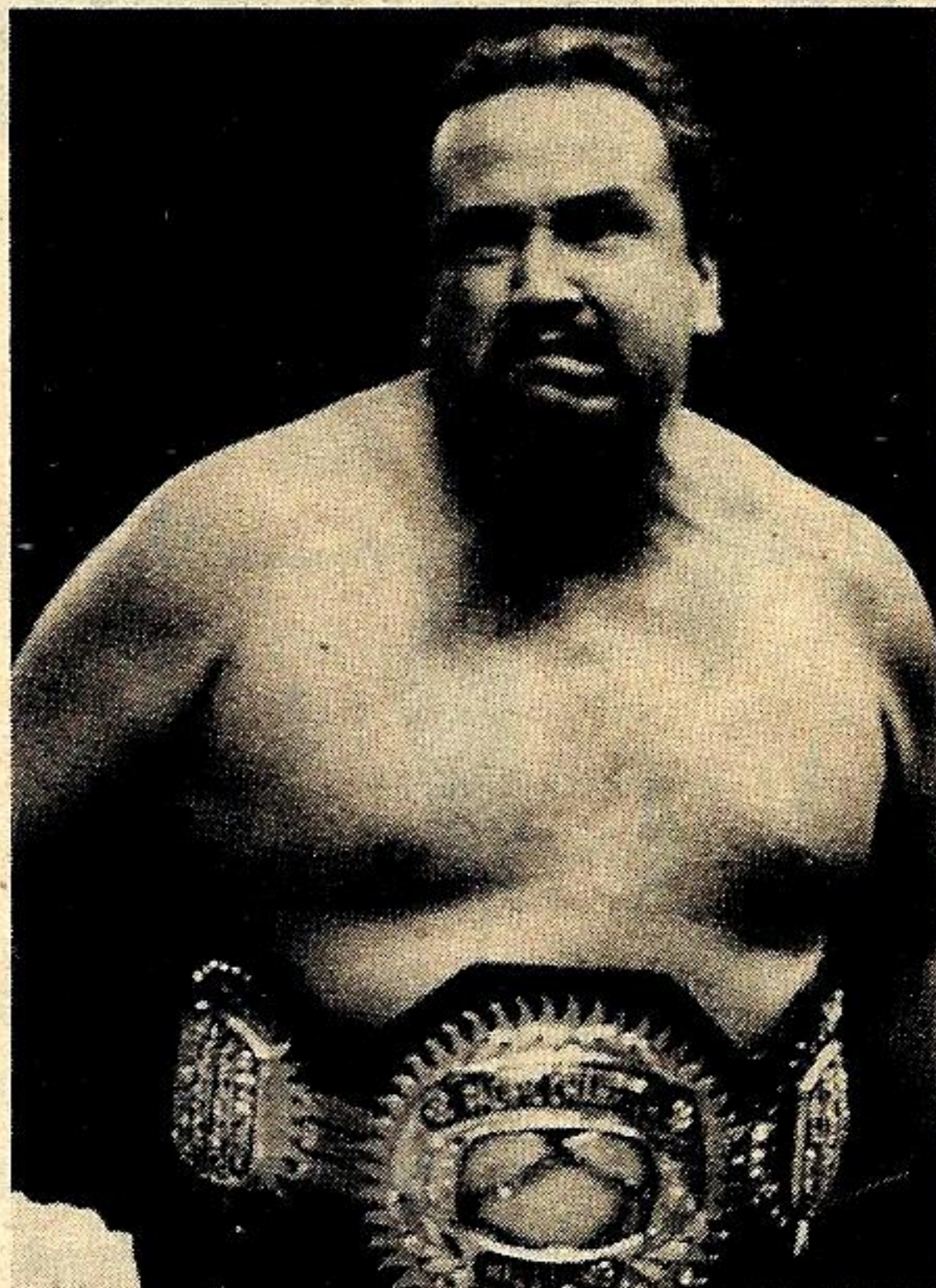
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CORRESPONDENT REPORTS

(Continued from Page 12)



King Curtis is in Florida now to do battle with his long-time foe Mark Lewin, who is not too worried by the violent threats.

In other Philadelphia action, the tag team of Haystacks Calhoun and Francisco Flores defeated the team of Frank Monte and Davey O'Hannon in two straight falls... Pete Sanchez had a difficult time, but finally managed to win over Mark Tendler... Pete Reeves made quick work of Stan Lavdis in less than five minutes time...

Tom Stanton barely managed a victory over Al Palmer... Manuel Soto and Johnny Rodz had an exciting battle though neither grappler was able to win a clear cut victory and the referee had to declare the match a draw.

FLORIDA REPORT By Wayne Gilyard

The wrestlers in the Sunshine State are suffering bruised and battered bodies from the invasion of King Curtis. Omar Negro, Jimmy Golden, Joe LeDuc and others have had to struggle to survive the Curtis onslaught.

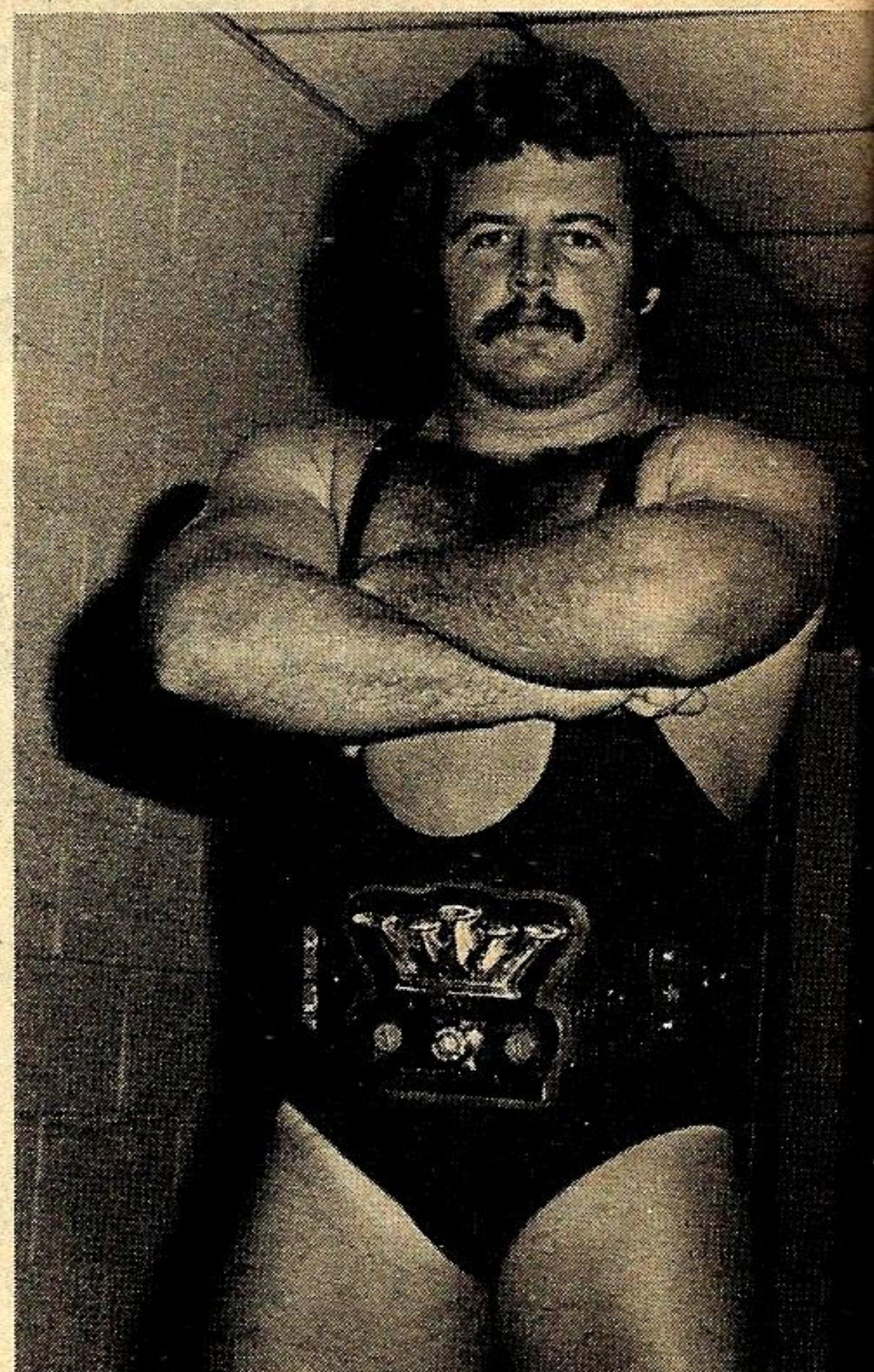
However, the man King really wants to savage is popular Mark Lewin. That is the reason King is in the area.

"Hearing Lewin's name mentioned makes me sick to my stomach!" Curtis growled recently. "I'm in Florida for one purpose: I'm going to finish off that louse once and for all. The first time he wrestles me will be the last time

he wrestles."

Mark doesn't take these threats seriously; his attention is upon the Florida title. He is devoting all his time to achieve his goal, and is training harder than any time in his career. His famous sleeper hold is more effective than ever. Curtis may be sent to dreamland before Lewin is driven out of wrestling.

Mike and Eddie Graham are teaming occasionally; each time the father-son combination joins forces,



Mike Graham is now occasionally teaming with his father, Eddie. Each time the two join together their opponents find them a hard combination to overcome.

the two are brilliant and exciting. Jim Dillon and Roger Kirby, forming one of the roughest tag teams around, met their match in the Grahams during a brutal confrontation.

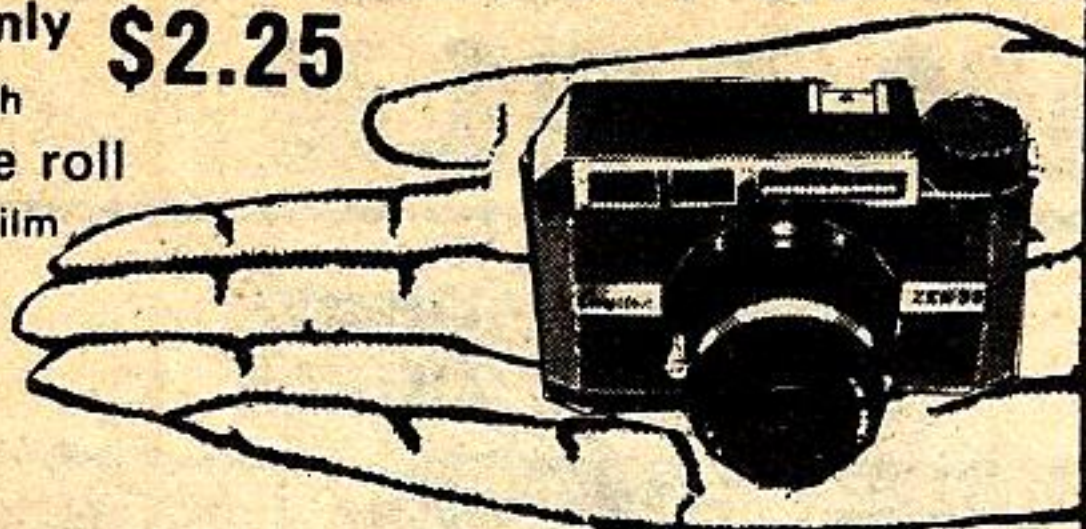
On his own, Mike is the current U.S. junior heavyweight champ, consistently turning back all challengers. Mike's recent match against Tony Charles was incredibly tough until Mike captured his foe in a reverse cradle.

Look for the Dusty Rhodes-Bob Roop feud to get even hotter. Chances are one of them may not survive their savage brawls. □

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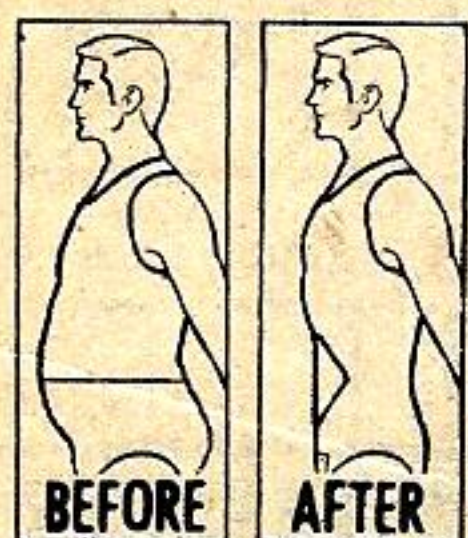
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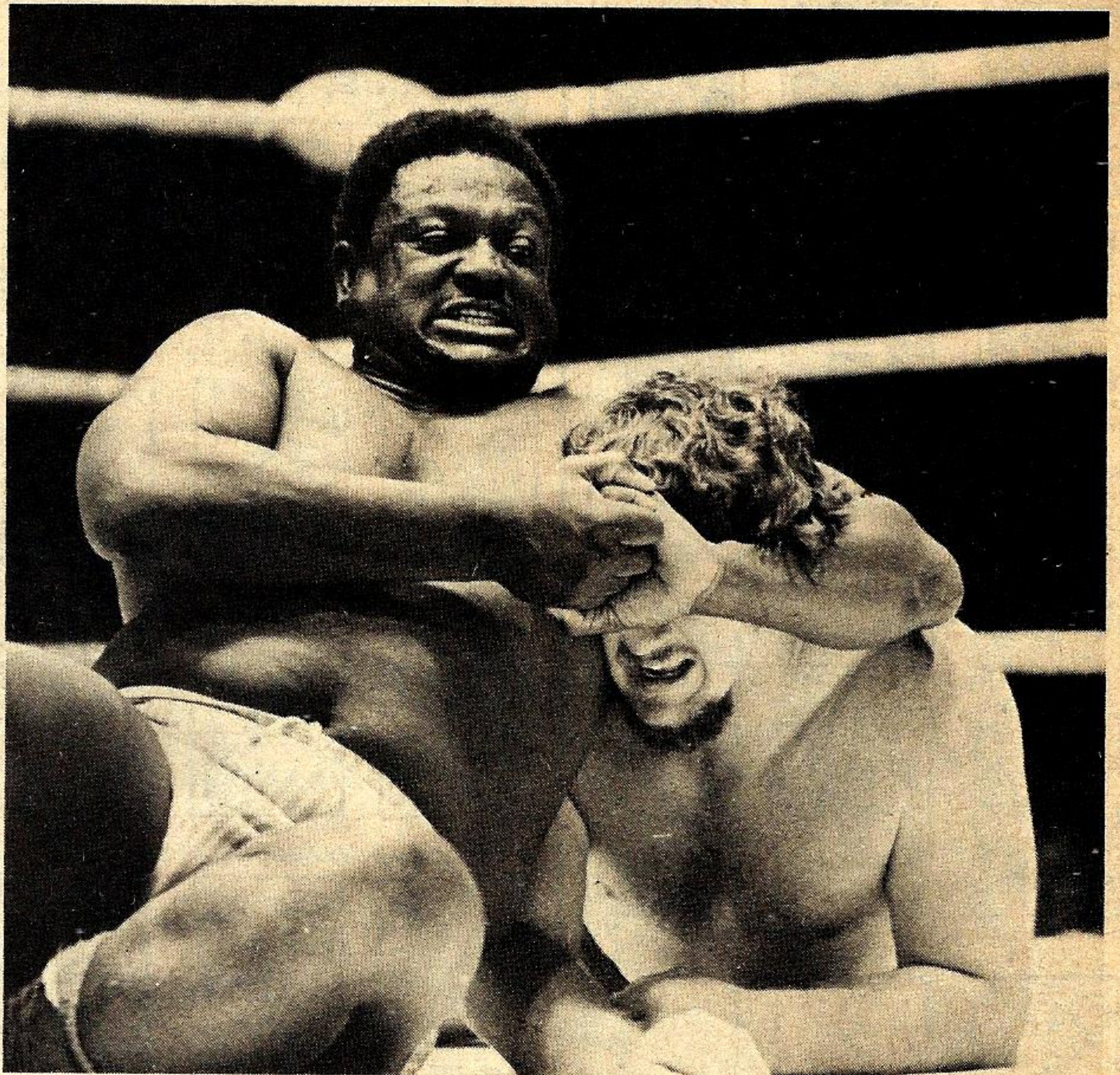
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YOU ASKED US

(Continued from Page 18)



Above: Rufus R. Jones torments Terry Funk with a fine headlock in one of their bouts. Below: Dick Murdoch has no intention of betraying his many new fans.



Q: When is Rufus R. Jones coming back to central Missouri?—Dinah Mikelis, Cedar City, Missouri

A: "I love the people in Missouri and hope to return soon," notes the popular Rufus. "Right now I'm busy in the mid-atlantic areas. Have patience, I'll be back real soon!"

Q: Has the Sheik ever held the NWA world title?—Jeff Hume, Lancaster, Kentucky

A: No. Sheik has held the United States title and other honors but the main belt has always exceeded his grasp.

Q: Where is Chief Jay Strongbow wrestling and when will he return to the WWWF areas?—Richard Flood, Centereach, New York

A: Strongbow is wrestling in the southern states and hopes to return to the WWWF this summer.

Q: Does Dick Murdoch still team with Dory and Terry Funk or has he returned to his old rulebreaking ways?—Ronnie Lucas, Memphis, Tennessee

A: Dick still teams with them and the fans are delighted he is on the side of the rulebook.

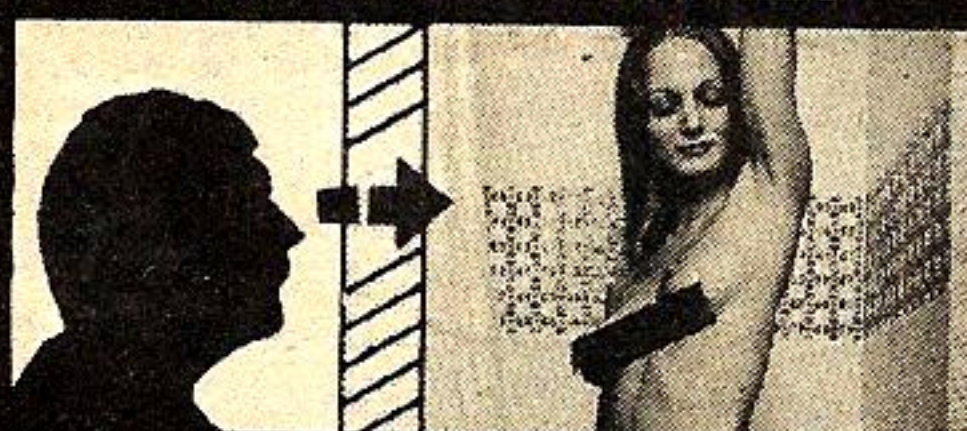
Q: Is it true Bobo Brazil once won the NWA title and refused it?—Peter Parker, Atlanta, Georgia

A: That's right. He won on a technicality during a match against then champion Buddy Rogers. "If I couldn't get a clean cut victory I did not want that belt," Bobo said. Thus the belt was turned over to Rogers again. □

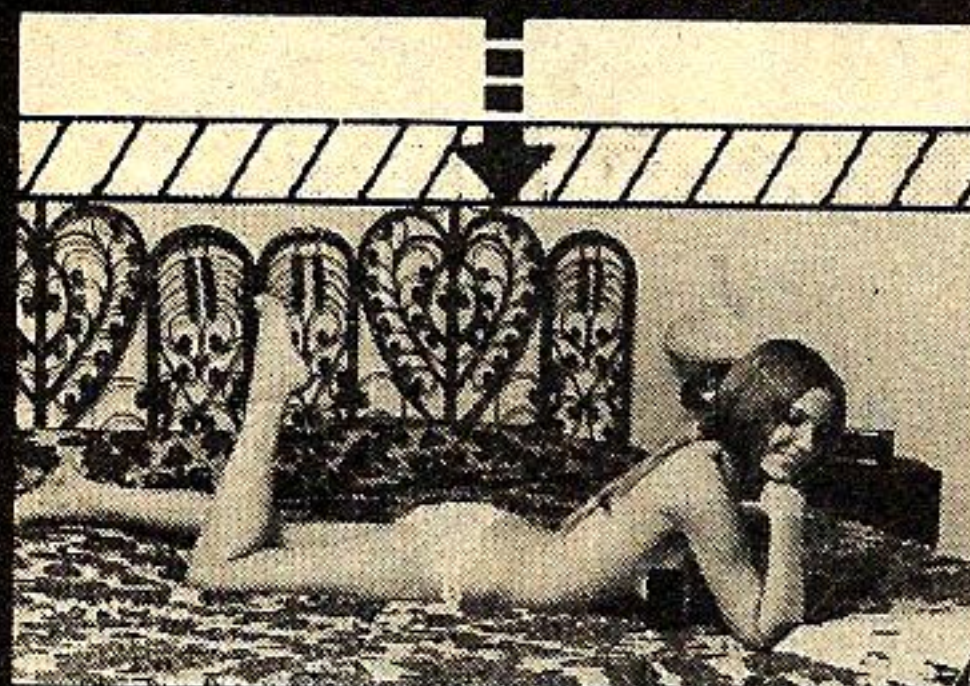
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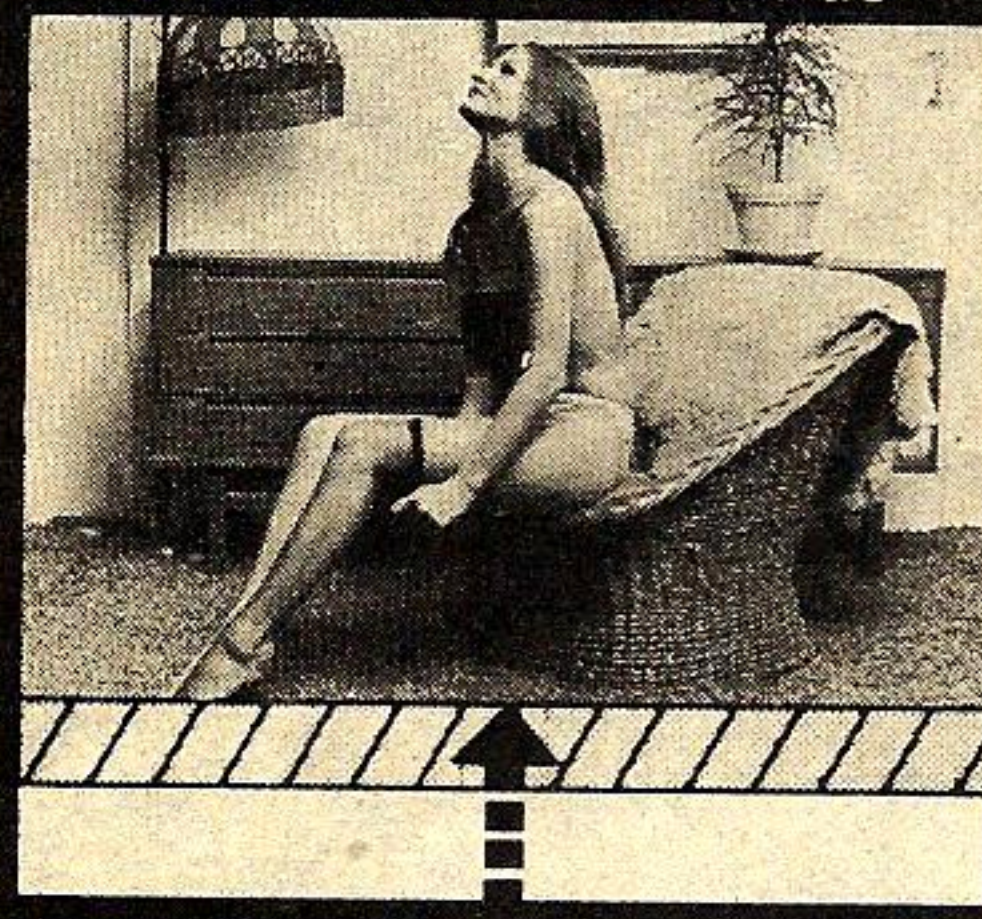
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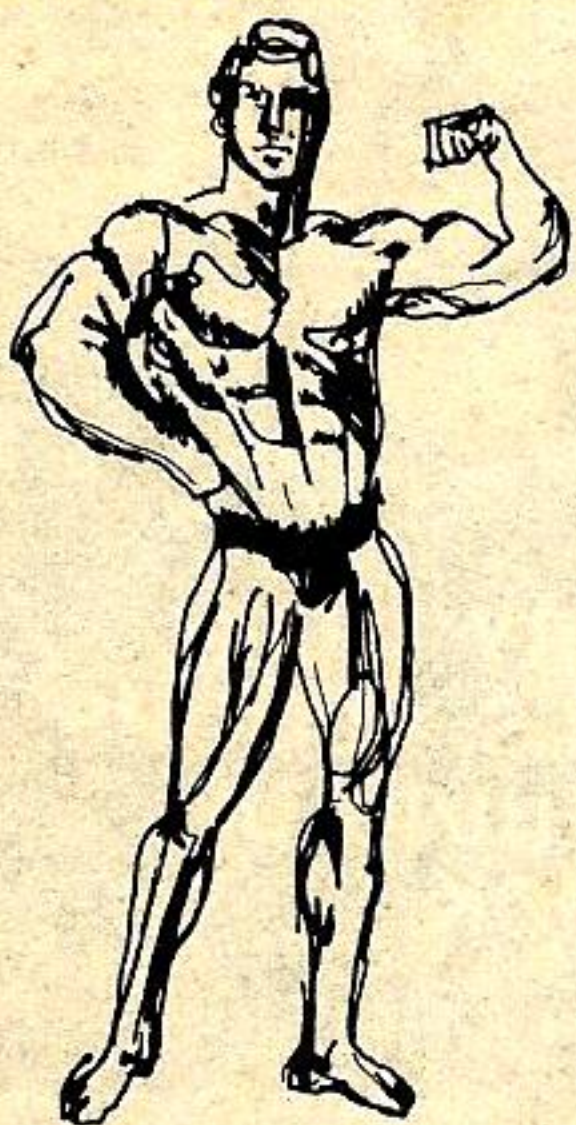
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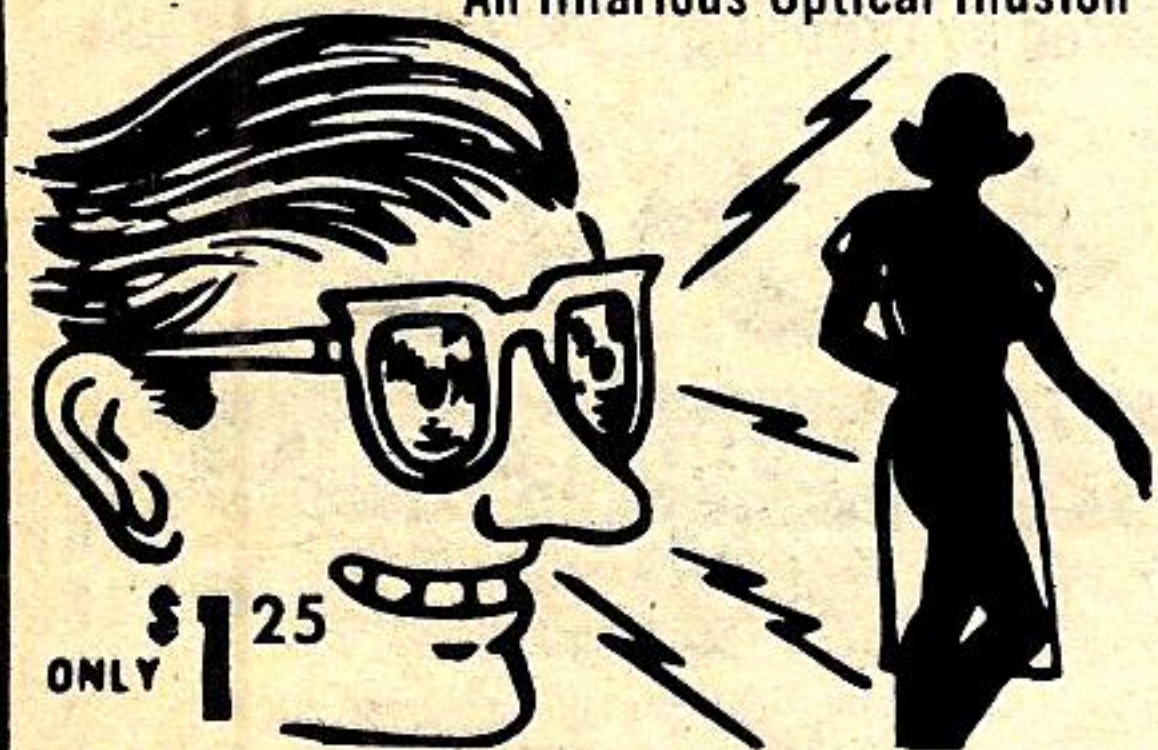
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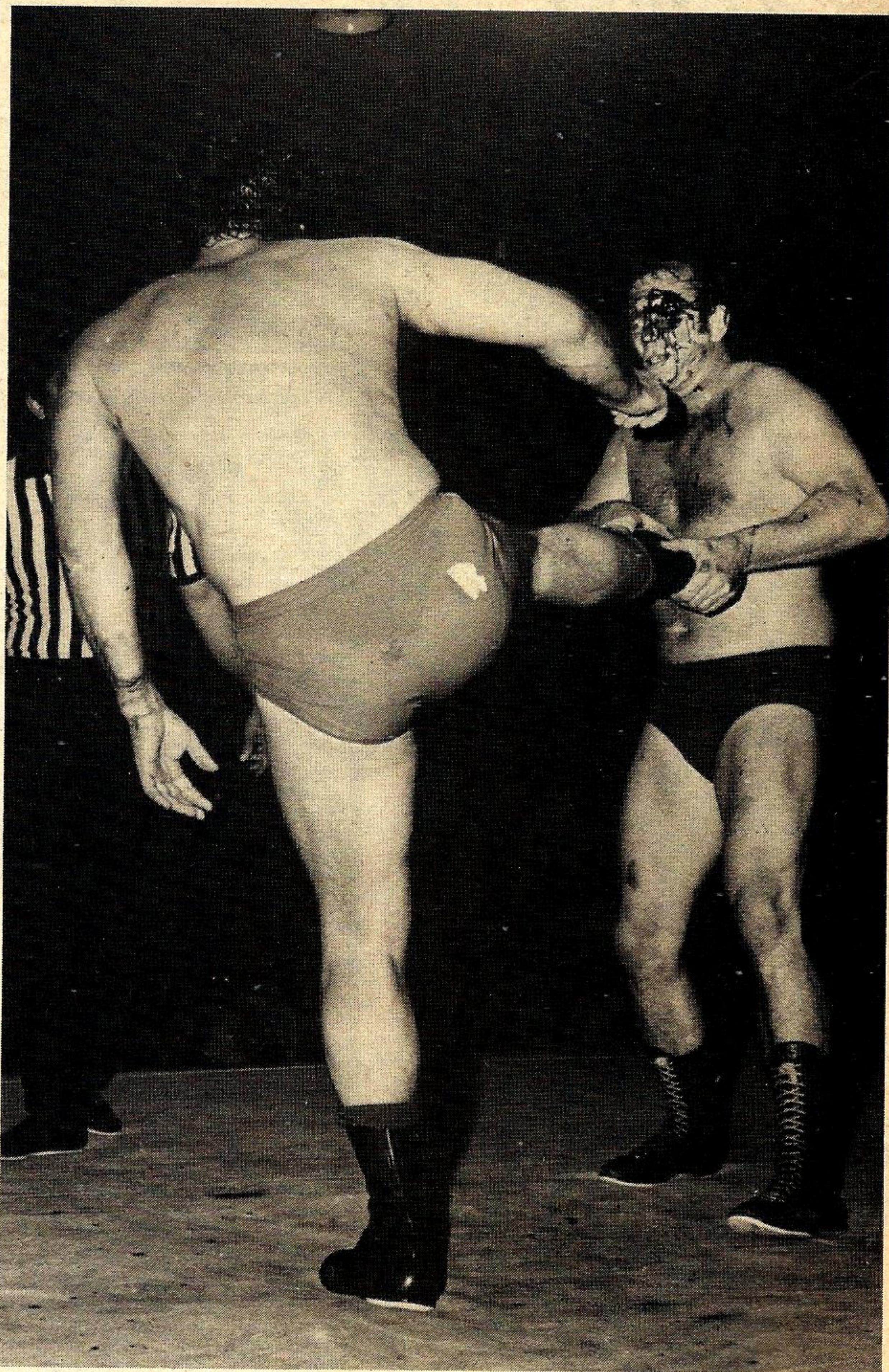
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BRISCO AND FUNK

(Continued from Page 42)



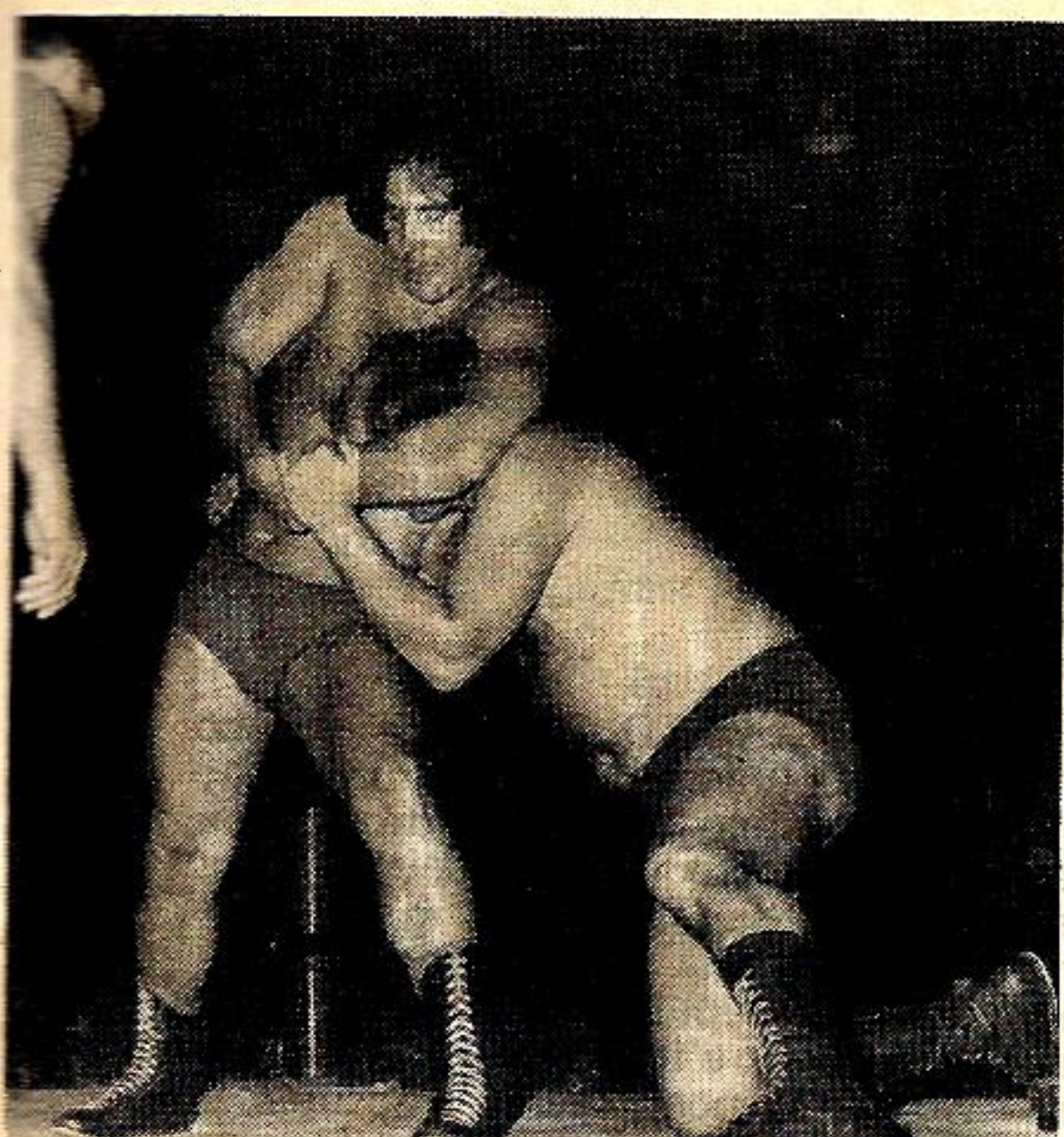
Though barely able to see through the veil of his own blood, Dory is able to catch Jack Brisco's foot before it slams him in the belly. You can't teach a wrestler to react like this; it is an instinct which is born within him and one he never will lose.

excellent wrestler. After all, stiffs don't become champion. Jack is a brilliant wrestling tactician.

"Great ability doesn't make for a great champion, though. Brisco doesn't care what he does or how he wins. I wish I had a penny for every dirty trick he's used to save his title! That kind of battle does little to bring glory to the sport."

But all champions use technicalities to save their titles; it is one of the very few advantages given to them to counter the devastating effects of their brutal schedule.

"Jack goes further than other champions," Dory declares, "using technicalities in place of talent. He's one of the most unpopular champions among other wrestlers



Dory is brought to his knees as Jack increases the pressure of his famed powerful headlock.

I've ever seen. That he's beloved by so many fans all over the world remains a mystery to me and many other wrestlers."

Could Dory's desire for the title make him unjustly harsh about Jack's talents?

"I try not to let my emotions cloud my judgement," Dory maintains, "though I guess they must in some ways. I honestly believe Brisco is an unscrupulous man—far from a credit to the sport. It may sound like sour grapes, but that's what I believe."

When you ask Dory if losing the championship affected him psychologically, as many of his friends claim, the former champion's face clouds over.

"Except for the special things that happen to any champion," Dory says, "I don't think I've changed any. I know a lot of people have said I lost a part of me when I lost the title. They haven't been too kind about it, either; even morons saying you're finished has to hurt. I'm as good as I ever was, maybe even better. Anyone who says anything different is just a louse who lives on rumors!"

When the match did get underway that evening, it was a magnificent encounter. It was also the first time either man bled in one of the matches. They proudly wore their wounds like scarlet medals. Fans were screaming throughout at their marvelous moves and countermoves. If anyone wanted to know about the best in wrestling, all he had to do was watch this contest.

In the end, it was a draw, so Jack retained his title. However, both men proved themselves champions!

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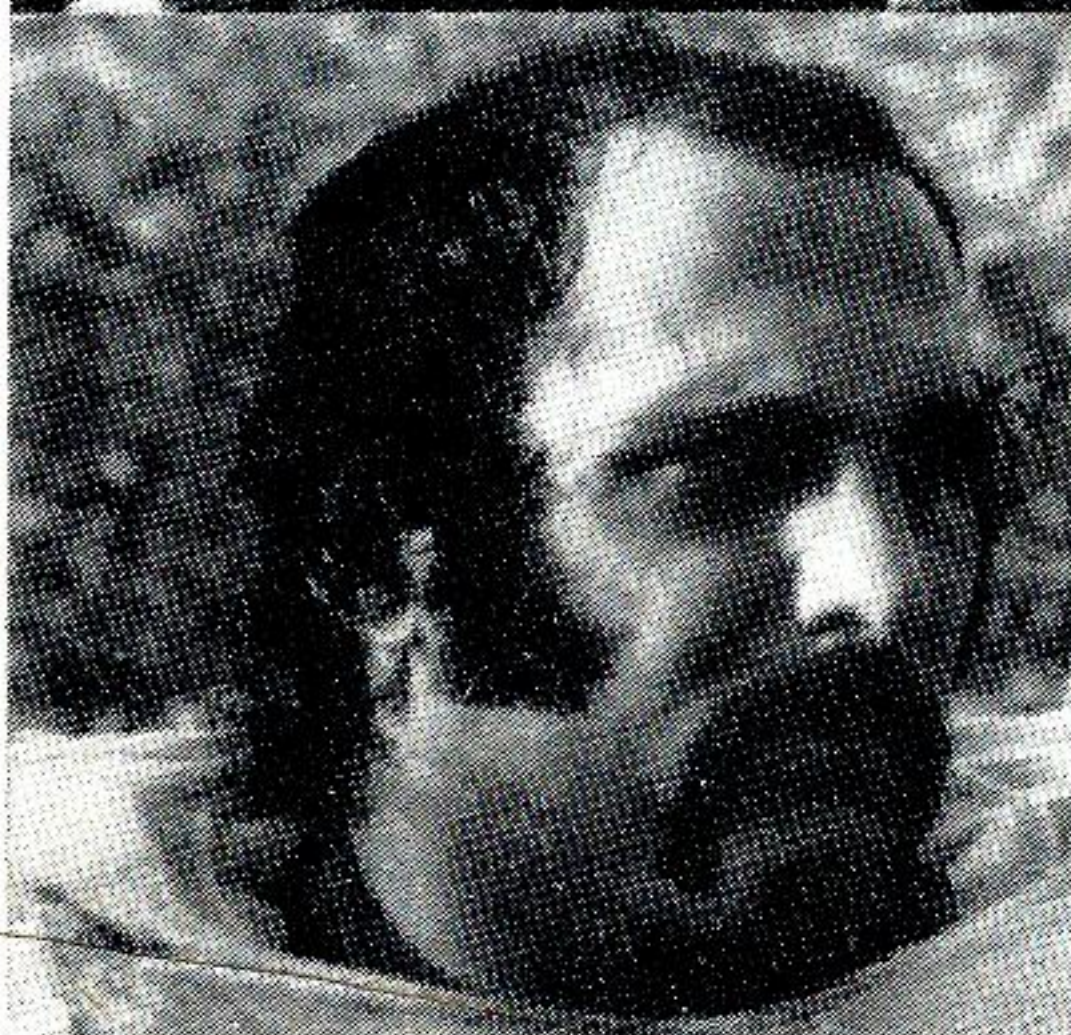
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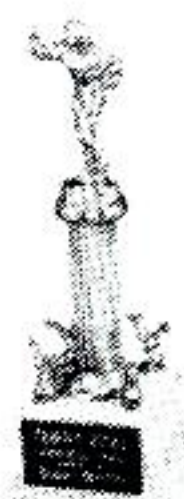
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